アゲハン
悪漢
2
尚月地
Tsukiji NAO
presents!

TSUKIJI
NAO

Tsukiji NAO presents!

2

ADEKAN

アデカン

CONTENTS

BONUS 005
FLOWERS BEYOND REACH

CHAPTER V 041
BRONZE DEMON

CHAPTER VI 093
FLOWERS OF THE HEART

CHAPTER VII 145
BEAST OF SPRING: PASS OF SEARCHING

CHAPTER VIII 169
MEMORY TAXIDERMY

221 EXTRA: THREE PORTRAITS OF THE WOMEN LATER
225 AFTERWORD

艶漢の人々

PEOPLE IN "ADEKAN"

A hothead who hates nothing more than super laid-back people.
KOJIRO YAMADA

A super laid-back umbrella craftsman who has trouble keeping on his loincloth properly.
SHIRO YOSHIWARA

The mysterious killer who is coming after Shiro.
ANRI YOSHIWARA

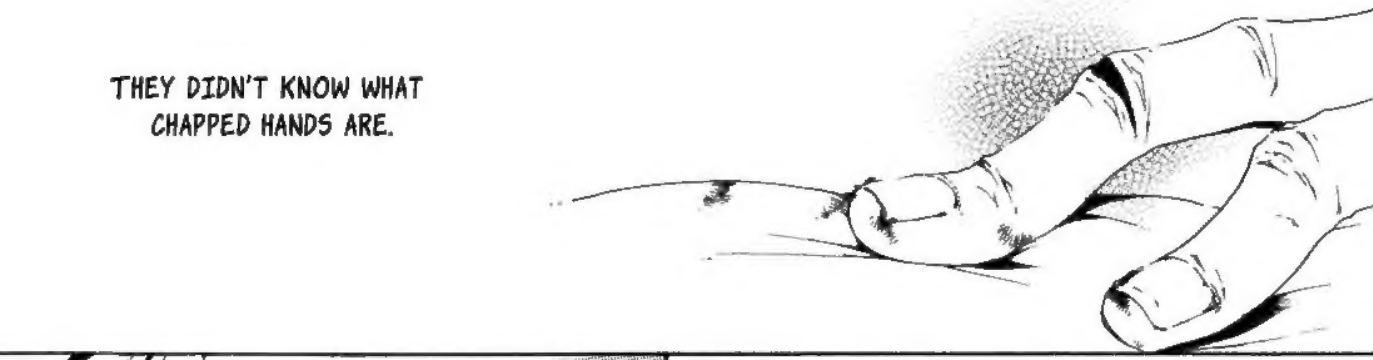
Clockwise from upper left:
MIZUHIKO SAOTOME (SECOND OFFICER)
SABUROUTA ARAGAMI
AGURI YAMADA
RURIMARU SAKIHANA (HEAD OFFICER)

BONUS

FLOWERS BEYOND REACH

IT WAS WINTER THE YEAR I STARTED WORKING AT FLOWERS OF HEAVEN.
THE WOMEN KNOWN AS THE TWIN BEAUTIES OF FLOWERS OF HEAVEN SAID...
OH MY...
...YOUR FINGERS ARE PRETTY.
INDEED.
HUH?
DO YOU...
...PUT ROUGE ON THEM?
THEY'RE LIKE THE PETALS OF A SPIDER LILY.

I WAS SURPRISED.
.....


THEY DIDN'T KNOW WHAT CHAPPED HANDS ARE.

...A WEARY LAUGH.
HA HA...
EVER SINCE I WAS A CHILD. I HAVE LABORED HARD FOR LOW PAY. SO MY RESPONSE TO THESE EASYGOING LADIES WAS...

GIMME A BREAK...
IT WAS ALL SO RIDICULOUS.

FLOWER UMBRELLAS!
HOW ABOUT A FLOWER UMBRELLA?
THEY'RE PERFECT FOR BLOCKING THE SUN!
BUSINESS SLOW AS USUAL, SHIRO?!
!
OFFICER!!
IT'S BECAUSE YOU MAKE SUCH WEIRD ONES.
KOJIRO YAMADA (PATROL OFFICER)

SHWUF
IT'S ANOTHER MASTER-PIECE!
THIS ISN'T WEIRD!
SHIRO YOSHIWARA (UMBRELLA ARTISAN)
IT'S A DECORATIVE ACCESSORY FOR THE UMBRELLA!
TUMP TUMP
WHATEVER. THAT OUTFIT'S SUSPICIOUS, TOO.
BUT IT STANDS OUT MORE THAN THE UMBRELLA!
HM?
OH...
...THIS ONE?
OFFICER... WHO'S THAT CHILD?
PRETTY CUTE, HUH?

STOP IMAGINING THINGS!!
IT'S ALWAYS THE SERIOUS ONES...
BUT YOU LOOK SO HARMLESS. HOW SORDID...
YOU FATHERED A LOVECHILD...
HMPH
DO AS YOU PLEASE.
IT'S NOTHING TO DO WITH ME.
HUH?
OFFICER KOJIRO. I GAVE BIRTH TO A CHILD BY YOU!
WAAAH
YOU MEANIE !!!
I HAVEN'T FATHERED ANY KIDS! WHAT THE-?! I'M NOT LIKE THAT !!
IT'S LIKE THAT, RIGHT? YOU'RE A LADY-KILLER!! THE SLAYER OF A THOUSAND WOMEN! ARGH...
ULP
AAGH?! WHAT, MY SWEET HONEY?!
WAAAH
BLUSH
I'M PREGNANT...
THEN... DID YOU GIVE BIRTH TO HIM?!

THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE!!! HE'S MY COUSIN!!
SOK
OH. SO THAT'S WHY HE RESEMBLES YOU.
BUT HE DOESN'T LIKE ME. I'M HAVING A HARD TIME.
WAAAH
OH? LET ME SEE.
HWIP
SILENCE
MM?
HUH?
GOO-GA-GA!
SMOOCH
MM...
UH...
JUST WHAT I'D EXPECT FROM THE COUSIN OF A LADY-KILLER. HE'S GOT GOOD SUCTION.
I'M NOT A LADY-KILLER! IT SEEMS HE LIKES YOU, THOUGH.

KRUMP
GOO!
AH!
THE UMBRELLA ...
AGH!! SORRY, SHIRO!
THAT'S ALL RIGHT. I'LL MAKE A BETTER ONE.
I'LL GO TO *FLOWERS OF HEAVEN* AND SEE WHAT THEY HAVE.
HUH? *FLOWERS OF HEAVEN*?
YEAH. IT'S A BIG FLOWER GARDEN IN THE NEXT TOWN. I'VE NEVER BEEN THERE.
NO. DON'T GO.
THEY SAY IT'S HAUNTED BY GHOSTS AND PEOPLE DISAPPEAR THERE.
HUH?

HA HA HA! GHOSTS DON'T EXIST! I'LL BE FINE!
THE LOCAL POLICE ARE INVESTIGATING. BUT...
IT'S A FAMOUS SPOT FOR TESTING ONE'S COURAGE.
OH, THE TWIN BEAUTIES OF FLOWERS OF HEAVEN? THERE'S A SONG ABOUT THEM.
BESIDES, THERE ARE PRETTY WOMEN THERE.
THE TWIN BEAUTIES OF FLOWERS OF HEAVEN.
MEN FROM ALL OVER OFFERED THEM GOLD AND JADE...
...AND CORAL AND SILK.
THEY RECEIVED PROPOSALS AS NUMEROUS AS THE STARS...
...AND LOVE ALL MEN...
...BUT THE TWINS ARE WOMEN OF LOVE...

...SO THEY NEVER GAVE THEMSELVES TO ANY ONE.

FLOWERS OF HEAVEN
地天花
HERE IT IS.
FLOWERS OF HEAVEN
花天地
TOK
カラ

IT LOOKS LIKE A NORMAL FLOWER GARDEN, BUT...
OH MY! WHAT A NICE-LOOKING CUSTOMER!
FWIF
ぶわ
!

WELCOME!
I AM YURAN.
AND I AM KYOKA.
WE OWN THE GARDEN.

YOU MUST BE THE TWIN BEAUTIES!
YOU'RE AS BEAUTIFUL AS THEY SAY YOU ARE.
THANK YOU. YOU ARE ATTRACTIVE YOURSELF.
INDEED. IT IS TOO BAD YOU ARE A MAN.
TUG
LET US TALK AS WE WALK.
HUH?
WHAT IS YOUR NAME?
UH... SHIRO YOSHI-WARA.
I MAKE UMBRELLAS IN THE NEXT TOWN.
YOU ARE AN ARTISAN! I MUST KNOW MORE!

BE CAREFUL, MR. YOSHIWARA. KYOKA IS COURTING SEVERAL MEN!
AH.
LOOK AT HOW MANY LOVE LETTERS CAME FOR HER YESTERDAY.
WOW! JUST YESTERDAY ?!
GOODNESS, YURAN! HOW CAN YOU SAY THAT IN FRONT OF HIM?
KYA HA HA HA!
OH HUSH, KYOKA!
TEE HEE HEE!
AFTER ALL, YOU HAVE THE YOUNG HUSBAND ON THE BACK STREET AND YAMAMOTO THE DRAPER AND THE LEADER OF NUMATA AND-
.....
WELL...
...I'M GONNA GO SEE THE GARDEN.
.....
SHF
HM? ALREADY?! TOO BAD.
INDEED.

WE WANTED YOU...
...TO STAY WITH US...
...FOREVER AND EVER.
WATCH OUT FOR GHOSTS.
...MR. YOSHIWARA.
BYE NOW...
.....
!
WELCOME, SIR.
TUMP
TOK
TOK

I'M THE GARDEN'S CARETAKER.
IT'S A BIG PLACE, SO I'LL SHOW YOU AROUND.
.....
IT REALLY IS BIG.
DRAG
DRAG
DRAG
YES.
DEEPER IN, THERE ARE...
...WILTED FLOWERS AND ABANDONED FLOWER BEDS.

BECAUSE OF THE RUMORS ABOUT GHOSTS, MOST PEOPLE ONLY COME TO TEST THEIR COURAGE.
WE'RE BARELY GETTING BY.
TO BE HONEST, THIS PLACE IS BEHIND THE TIMES.
BUT THE LADIES WHO OWN IT LIVE SO LUXURIOUSLY.
YES. THEY WERE *BORN* INTO LUXURY.
THEY DON'T KNOW WHAT MONEY MEANS!
NO MATTER HOW POOR THE FINANCES GET FOR THIS GARDEN THAT THEY INHERITED...
...THEY SPEND MONEY LIKE IT'S WATER!
THEY SURE AIN'T LIKE THE WOMEN BACK IN THE COUNTRY!

...THE WOMEN WORK HARD!
WHERE I COME FROM...
TO MAKE LIFE A LITTLE EASIER...
...THEY LOOK TO MARRY A MAN WHO WILL EARN MORE MONEY!
Me
POVERTY ALWAYS HAD ME DOWN...
...SO THEY NEVER PAID ME ANY MIND.
SOME WOMEN WORK FOR EVERY PENNY...
...WHILE OTHERS WASTE MONEY THEY GET FOR NOTHIN'.
THOSE BEAUTIFUL TWINS ARE LIKE EXPENSIVE FLOWERS.

NEGLECT THEM EVEN A LITTLE AND...
EXPENSIVE FLOWERS...
...REQUIRE FERTILIZER AND GOOD SOIL...
...AND MONEY AND CARE.
THEY'RE FRAIL FLOWERS BEYOND REACH.
THEY AREN'T AS STURDY AS WEED-LIKE WOMEN.
THEY DIE RIGHT AWAY.
...SO YOU MUST HAVE NOTICED.
YOU SAW THEM...

...AREN'T REALLY GIRLS AT ALL!
...THAT THOSE TWO...
YOU MUST'VE NOTICED...
FWISH
GAH
?!
!!!
FWUD

WHUH...?
SHUF
HOLD 'IM DOWN!!
HE'S AWFULLY SKINNY! HE A WOMAN?!
WHAT A CATCH! THIS TYPE'S EXPENSIVE!
.....
GRAB
GOOD JOB. YOU'LL GET A FAT CUT.
HA HA HA!

YOU'RE HELPING ABDUCT PEOPLE?!
EVEN A BORN BEGGAR LIKE ME...
...NEEDS MONEY FOR SAKE TO WEEP OVER!
HA HA HA! GIVE IT UP, BOY!
!!!
KRACK
HWIP

WHOOSH
!!!
GRAB
WAP
WHAT THE-?!
GUAAAH!
FWIP
AGH!
YOU DON'T FEEL...
...LIKE A GHOST.
TH-THAT HURTS!
OW!
SHF

FWOOSH
WHAT'RE YOU DOIN'?!
WHAM
!!
FWIP
WHACK
GAH!
FWIP
SPIN
SPIN
SPIN
WRNCH
?!

FWAM
TOMP
BADUM
FWIP
?!
TUG

FWOOSH
CONCEALED WEAPONS!!
WHOA!
GAH!
SLASH
WHAM
UGH!
FWIP
AAH!
WHAM
WHAM

SKIDD
-IGAAAAU
I AIN'T LOOKIN' TO FIGHT A PROFESSIONAL ASSASSIN!
SPARE MY LIFE!
OK, I GET THE MESSAGE! SORRY!!
WHOA!
WHAT?!
I SELL UMBRELLAS.
I'M NOT A PRO.
POK
WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?!
KCHIK
OH, MORE VISITORS TO THE GARDEN?

YOU'RE JUST IN TIME. SUMMON THE POLICE.
.....
SO YOU WERE ABETTING ABDUCTION...
...FOR DRINKING MONEY?
YES... ...THAT'S RIGHT.
I SPREAD THAT RUMOR ABOUT GHOSTS TO ATTRACT THRILL-SEEKERS.
AND I WANTED TO SOIL THE GARDEN'S NAME BECAUSE OF THOSE FOOLS WHO RUN IT!
LUCKILY, THERE HAVEN'T BEEN MANY VICTIMS. THE ABDUCTORS CAN TELL US WHO THEIR BUYERS WERE.
BUT WE MUST ACT QUICKLY!
LET'S GO.
CLOMP
.....
SMACK
YOU CRETIN!! WHAT KIND OF REASON IS THAT?!
H-HEY!

!
DO YOU FEEL BETTER SINCE THEY CAN HELP THE VICTIMS?
TMP
.....
YOU DIDN'T DO THIS FOR DRINKING MONEY.
IT WAS FOR THE TWINS, RIGHT?
THEIR EXTRAVAGANCE WAS AS FAMOUS AS THEIR BEAUTY.
NO MATTER HOW MUCH OF A FORTUNE THEY RECEIVED...
...I WOULD GUESS THEY'VE REACHED THE BOTTOM.
I MEAN...

...THINK ABOUT HOW *OLD* THEY ARE.
...SO AT FIRST GLANCE, I WAS SURPRISED BY HOW YOUNG THEY LOOKED.
THEY BECAME THE SUBJECT OF RUMOR AND SONG LONG AGO....
...IT BREAKS AWAY WHEN THEY TALK.
NO MATTER HOW THICK THEIR MAKEUP IS...

RATHER THAN OLD WOMEN IN THE SKIN OF YOUNG GIRLS...
...THEY'RE MORE LIKE TEENAGE GIRLS IN THE SKIN OF OLD WOMEN.
NOW THEY'RE COMING ON TO THAT OFFICER.
IT'S HARD TO MAINTAIN SUCH A YOUNG EMOTIONAL STATE FOR SO LONG.
SOMEONE MUST HAVE CARED FOR AND PAMPERED THEM.
YOU WROTE ALL THOSE LOVE LETTERS TO KYOKA. DIDN'T YOU?
THE SENDERS' NAMES WERE ALL DIFFERENT. BUT THE HANDWRITING WAS THE SAME.
.....
YES. I DID IT.

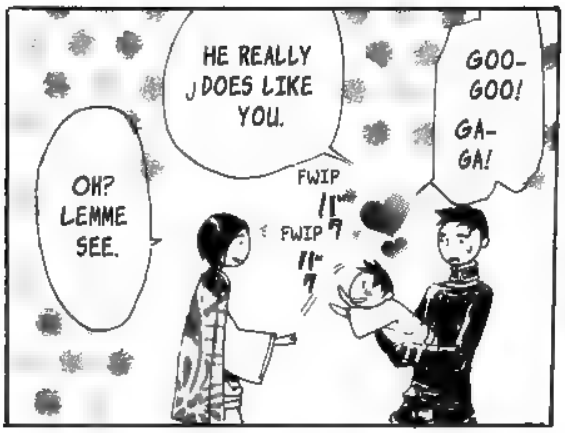
BUT IF I HADN'T...
...WITHOUT MONEY OR MEN...
...THOSE TWO...
...WOULD HAVE CHANGED!
THEY WOULD HAVE BECOME *COMMON!*
THEY WOULD HAVE BECOME HARSH, JEALOUS, AND DIRTY LIKE COUNTRY WOMEN!
...AND BE THE INNOCENT, CAREFREE LADIES THAT THEY ARE!
...WITH THE EASE OF THOSE WHO HAVE IT ALL...
THEY WOULDN'T SMILE AT SOMEONE LIKE ME...

...SEEMED SO PURE.
...THEIR EASYGOING NATURE AND FREEDOM FROM THE LIMITATIONS OF THE WORLD...
TO ME...
...TO MAKE THEM STILL FEEL DESIRABLE.
...I WROTE LOVE LETTER AFTER LOVE LETTER...
...THEY BEGAN AGING AND MEN ABANDONED THEM...
EVER SINCE...
NO. THAT MAN IS...
HE'S GUILTY OF...
MAKE THE OFFICERS SOME TEA!
YOU-HOO! YOU!
THAT WAS FINE AS LONG AS THEY HAD MONEY. BUT...
...I JUST ...

HA HA! SO CARE-FREE...
YOO-HOO! YOU OVER THERE!
NO, MA'AM. HE'S...
THEY DON'T KNOW MY NAME. THEY'VE NEVER EVEN ASKED.
THEY HAVE NO INTEREST IN ME. NONE AT ALL.
THEY CALL ME *YOU* OR JUST CALL OUT *YOO-HOO*. I'M LIKE AIR TO THEM.
BUT THEY REMEMBER THE NAME OF EVERY SUITOR FROM DECADES AGO. HA HA...
THEY RELY ON *ME*, THOUGH.
"YOU-HOO! YOU!"
"YOU!"
I'VE COME TO THINK...
...I'M MORE SPECIAL THAN THE MEN...
...WHOSE NAMES THEY *DO* REMEMBER.
WHAT A FOOL I AM.
WHAT A FOOL...
AND AT MY RIPE OLD AGE...

THEY DEPENDED ON YOU...
...AND YOU DEPENDED ON YOUR ILLUSION TOWARD THEM.
IS THAT IT?
IT MAY NOT BE FOR ME TO SAY...
...BUT I THINK...
...HUMAN BEINGS CAN'T GO ON...
...IF THEY SIMPLY CLING TO SOMETHING ELSE.
THEY NEED STRENGTH INSIDE TO KEEP WALKING THROUGH LIFE.

WELCOME BACK, SHIRO!
FWIP
YOU'RE BACK, SHIRO?
OH...
TOK
TOK


HE REALLY DOES LIKE YOU.
GOO-GOO! GA-GA!
OH? LEMME SEE.
FWIP
FWIP

I DID PICK A FLOWER, THOUGH.
I'LL TELL YOU LATER.
DID YOU SEE ANY GHOSTS?

HE'S NOT MY KID! AND I'M NOT A LADY-KILLER!!
BUT THAT KID IS AWFULLY FORWARD...
HE'S AN AGGRESSIVE KISSER! JUST LIKE HIS FATHER!
HEH HEH HEH...
SMOOCH
I HOPE YOU GROW UP NICE AND STRONG... AS BEFITS THE SON OF A LADY-KILLER!

EVERYONE!!
SEE? IT'S MORE FUN WHEN EVERYONE HUGS!
IT... IS?
SMUSHH
HUH?
TUG
SHIRO AND KO-CHAN ARE HAVING FUN!
LET'S JOIN, BIG BRO!!
STRRRETCH
LIMF!
LIMF!
OK. HERE. CAN YOU GET IT?
FWIP
OH, YOU WANT THIS?
GOO!
GRAB
ぱし
!
GOOD!
SMILE
YOU GOT IT WITH YOUR OWN HAND!
END

ANSWER, DOJIN-SAMA...
GRANT US A PROPHECY FOR THE PROSPERITY OF HOUSE KASUGA!
I... I HAVE RE-CEIVED ...
...THE MOST AWFUL REVE-LATION!!
MISS KOMAKI HAS EARNED DOJIN-SAMA'S WRATH!
IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS, A BRONZE DEMON WILL EAT HER!!
!!CHATTER
WH-WHAT?!
MISS KOMAKI?!
HELLO. I'M KOMAKI KASUGA. THIS MORNING IT WAS PROPHESIED THAT A DEMON WILL EAT ME.
I'M A WITHDRAWN 15-YEAR-OLD.

CHAPTER V

I'M A TOTAL COWARD.
...BUT I'M EVEN AFRAID OF *NORMAL* MEN.
YOU MIGHT THINK IT'S JUST A PROPHECY...
CHAPTER V
BRONZE DEMON

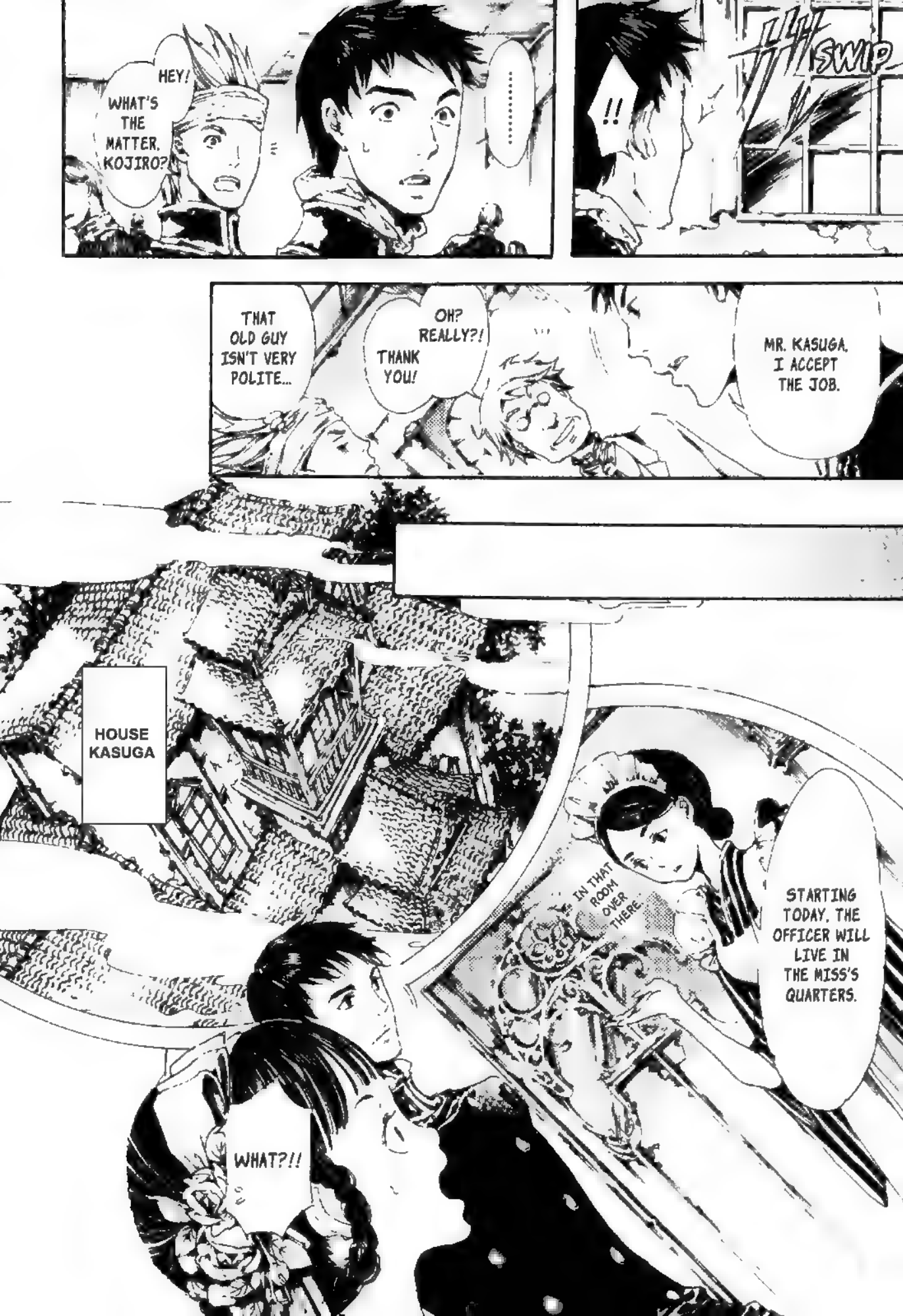
I'M WORKING!
DON'T BOTHER ME WITH THAT!!
EVEN WHEN MY MOTHER WAS DYING...
HE'S OBSESSED WITH HIS WORK.
THE CAUSE IS MY FATHER.
...HE JUST KEPT WORKING.
HE'S A MASTER ARTISAN WHO MAKES BRONZE STATUES.
I BECAME AFRAID OF MY FATHER...
...AND OF ALL MEN.
GLINT
...IN MEN'S MUSCLES!!
BUT I HAVE A BURNING INTEREST...
...AND THE LOCAL FISHERMEN SAVED ME.
ONCE, WHEN I WAS PLAYING AT THE BEACH, A WAVE SWEPT ME AWAY...

GOOD THING WE CAUGHT YOU!
TADAAA!!
HMPH!
I HAD GROWN UP LOOKING AT MY FATHER'S WIRY FRAME...
IT WAS CULTURE SHOCK.
IT'S NOTHING SHAMEFUL, THOUGH.
SOMETIMES I HELP MY FATHER WITH THE STATUES.
I'M INTERESTED IN SCULPTING.
I TRY TO MAKE THEIR RUGGED, MANLY BODIES MORE REALISTIC.
HA HA HA HA
BAM

THAT'S THE SITUA-TION...
OH, NO...
...SO TODAY MY FATHER TOOK ME TO THE POLICE STATION.
I'M IN A TER-RIBLE FLUS-TER.
THERE ARE HARD-BODIED MEN EVERYWHERE!!
IT'S A TOTAL PARADISE!!
KOMAKI. THIS MAN WILL BE YOUR GUARD.
GULP
HUH?
I'M KOJIRO YAMADA.
PLEASED TO MEET YOU.

HIS BODY IS FLAWLESS!! AND HIS POSTURE IS PERFECT!
...NOT TOO THIN AND NOT TOO HEAVY...
H... HE...
HE'S...
HE HAS THE IDEAL BODY!!
GAWP
?
OH, UH. SORRY. SHE'S AFRAID OF MEN.
AH!
KOMAKI!! SAY HELLO!
SHE MAY BE AN ANDROPHOBE. BUT SHE'LL BE FINE IF YOU WALK AT A SLIGHT DISTANCE FROM HER.
UNDERSTOOD.
A BRONZE DEMON IS GOING TO EAT HER. YOU SAY?
BOW
OH, RIGHT. SORRY! NICE TO MEET YOU! I'M KOMAKI KASUGA!

ARTISTS ARE LIKE THAT, THOUGH.
HE MAY BE A MASTER SCULPTOR, BUT HE'S A LITTLE WEIRD...
.....
YES.
SOUNDS LIKE THE *OCCULT* TO ME...
ACCORDING TO A PROPHECY FROM DOJIN-SAMA.
CHAK
N-NO, THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEANT!!
WE HAVE WORSHIPPED DOJIN-SAMA FOR GENERATIONS! HIS POWER IS ABSOLUTE!!
DO YOU DOUBT HIM?!
?!!!


HEY!
WHAT'S THE MATTER, KOJIRO?
.....
!!
SWIP
MR. KASUGA, I ACCEPT THE JOB.
OH? REALLY?!
THANK YOU!
THAT OLD GUY ISN'T VERY POLITE...
HOUSE KASUGA
STARTING TODAY, THE OFFICER WILL LIVE IN THE MISS'S QUARTERS.
IN THAT ROOM OVER THERE.
WHAT?!!

RIGHT THIS WAY...
THE BATH IS READY.
YOU BOTH MUST BE TIRED.
B-BUT ...!
YOUR FATHER INSISTS.
THIS IS...
...IM-PRES-SIVE.
THEY ALL BELONG TO THE MASTER

HE IS PASSIONATE ABOUT HIS RESEARCH.
HE MADE SOME HIMSELF...
...AND ORDERED OTHERS FROM OVERSEAS FOR STUDY.
OH! YOU MUST BE THE BODYGUARD!
PLEASED TO MEET YOU. I'M YAHACHI, THE MASTER'S PUPIL.
PLEASE, TAKE CARE OF MISS KOMAKI!
SHAKE
OF COURSE!
I'M HEITA, ANOTHER PUPIL.
BOW
YES, THAT'S RIGHT.

!!!
GIEEEEEEEH!!
?!!
GEH!
GIEEH!!
GIGI!
GEGEH!
WHACK
GYAH!
GAAH!
GYOH!
JA'GAGAGAH!
!
TMP.
OFFICER...
WELL, OFFICER... THAT'S, UH...
OH, UH...!
THERE'S A STRANGE VOICE COMING FROM BACK THERE!!
IT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH THIS.
PRETEND YOU DIDN'T HEAR THAT VOICE.

...BUT IT'S NOTHING TO IGNORE!
IT MAY BE UNRELATED...
.....
ALL RIGHT. FOLLOW ME.
SOMETHING IS UNUSUAL ABOUT THIS HOUSE...
EVEN THE BATH...
...IS INCRED-IBLE.
men
!
RATTLE
MASTER CRAFTSMEN MUST MAKE AN ASTOUNDING AMOUNT OF MONEY.
SLOSH
IT'S AMAZING FOR ONE HOUSE TO HAVE SEPARATE BATHS.

GURGLE... GLUGLE... GULGUL...
IT DEFINITELY ISN'T MEEGLE... MEGLE... MURGLE...
MUTTER MUTTER
?!!
STAGGER
STAGGER
MR. KASUGA ...?
MR. KASUGA?!
GASP
I... I...
I DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE IN HERE.
ARGH!
HOW AWFUL OF ME!! I... I...
I HATE CARELESS PEOPLE LIKE THAT!!
YOU KNOW?!
AH?!
OH!
OFFICER ... YOU WERE...
...HERE ?

SPLISH
.....
TUNK
PARDON ME.
WELL... ...I'LL BE LEAVING THEN.
WHAT IS WITH THIS PLACE?!!
IF SOMEONE FINDS OUT OUR HOUSE'S SECRET...
KA-CHAK
IT'S TOO BAD THE OFFICER HEARD THAT VOICE...
I HOPE NOTHING HAPPENS.
SIGH

GAH!
OK!
TH-
TH-
THUMP
THUMP
Y-YEP! I'M SCARED!!!
TH-
THUMP
I GOT BACK BEFORE YOU.
OH. MISS KOMAKI.
CREAK
WAH!!
THA-
THUUMMP
A WELL-DEFINED CHEST AND ABDOMI-NALS !!!!
KSHINK
M-MISS KOMAKI ?!!

ARGH! I'M SO STUPID !!
YES.
IS THAT WHAT WESTERN DANCE IS LIKE?
FWIP
OH... SORRY. I'VE BEEN LEARNING WESTERN DANCE AND JUST...
I'LL CLOSE THE WINDOW.
OH, THE WIND IS PICKING UP.
HWOO
TRMBL
TRMBL
HE HAS FIRM AND AMAZING MUSCLES!! HE'S GOTTA MODEL FOR ME!!
I JUST SAW HIS INNER THIGH MUSCLE !!!
THA-THUUMP !!!
SWIP
SPURT
M-MISS KOMAKI !!!

FWUD
TODAY IS LIKE MUSCLES ON PARADE!!!
WHUP
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT? YOU'RE TALKING FUNNY!!
WHAT HAPPENED ?!
!!
WHAM
IT'S NOTHING !!
!!
OH... SORRY. I JUST...
SO HARD!!!
HIS MUSCLES ARE SO HARD!! LIKE STEEL!
AND...

...HE WAS WARM.
IT ONLY MAKES SENSE, THOUGH.
I MADE YOU WORRY, BUT...
OH... NO... I'M SO SORRY!!
MISS KOMAKI?
GASP
MEN ARE LIVING CREATURES WITH A BODY TEMPERATURE, BLOOD...
...AND A HEART.
SMILE
I'VE ONLY EVER VIEWED MEN AS MODELS FOR COLD BRONZE STATUES. I NEVER PAID ATTENTION TO WHAT WAS INSIDE!
DOES THAT MEAN...

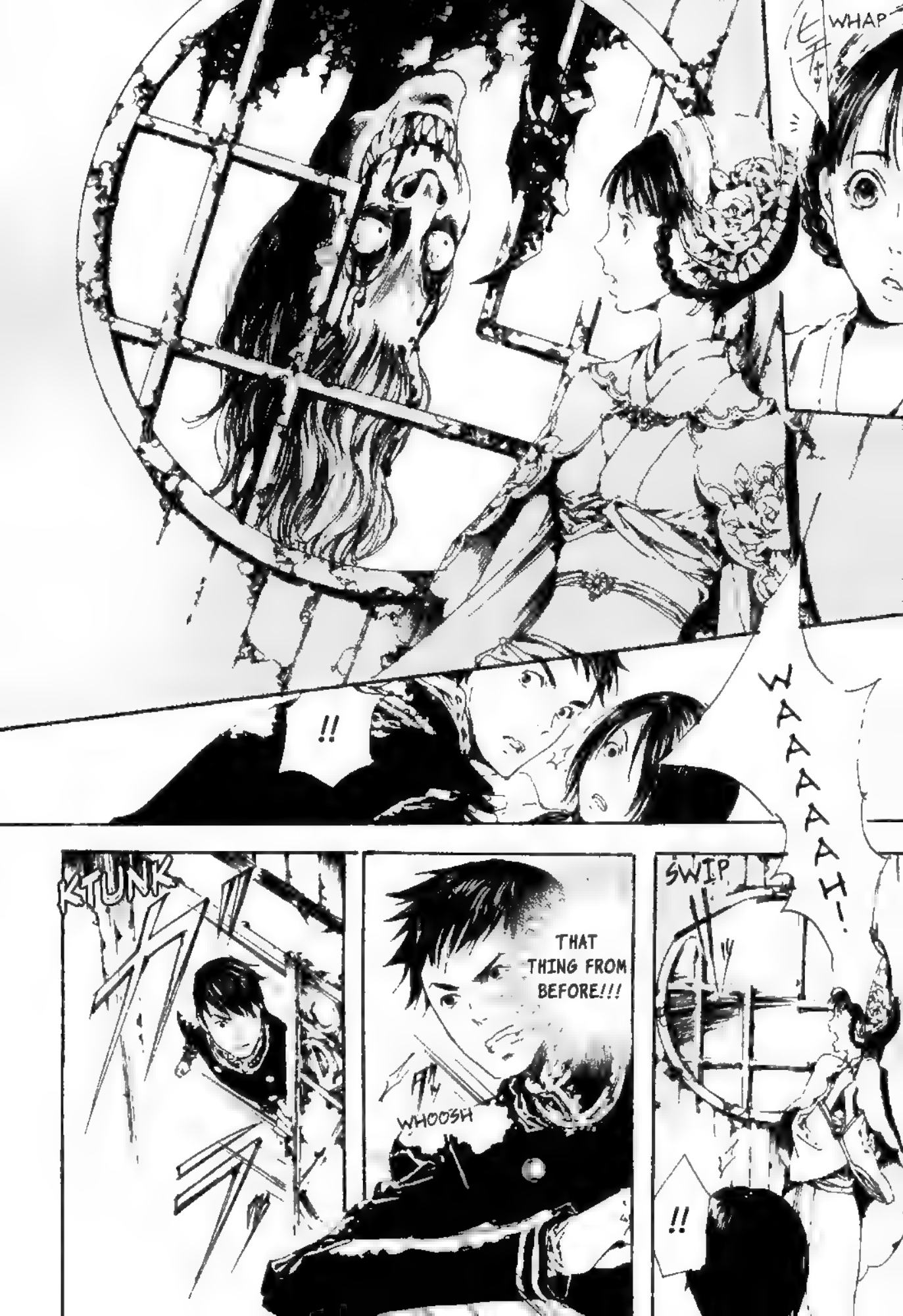
...I NEVER VIEWED MEN AS PEOPLE?!
MISS KOMAKI...
...YOU DON'T LOOK WELL.
HUH?
SHALL WE GO OUT TO ENJOY OURSELVES TOMORROW?
UH...
...OK.
I GUESS SOME MEN CAN BE NICE...
THE NEXT DAY.
SHIRO! IT'S ME!
RATTLE
屋台

TA-DUM
OH, HI.
WELCOME.
Y-YOU'RE NAKED AGAIN!! PUT ON SOME CLOTHES!!
AACK!
DON'T LOOK, MISS!
SAY WHAT YOU WANT. BUT I WISH THE WHOLE WORLD WERE NAKED.
BUT IT'S INDECENT!! I REALLY WILL ARREST YOU, YOU KNOW!!

NOW COVER YOURSELF!!
BUT HE LOOKS GOOD...
YEAH, THAT'S TRUE...
HE WOULD SUIT THE TASTES OF SOME.
HE HAS A SLENDER, WHITE BODY AND ATTRACTIVE FACE...
THE IMAGININGS OF HER HEART.
...AND SUPPLE FINGERS. BUT...
...NO MUSCLES ?!!
ACK!
MUSCLE FETISH
UH... SORRY. MISS KOMAKI. THIS GUY'S...
...A LITTLE WEIRD.

THIS SHOP IS FULL OF ODDITIES HE HAS GATHERED. HAVE A LOOK AROUND!
UM... ...OK.
GLANCE
WOW! IT REALLY IS!
SO MUCH INTER-ESTING STUFF!
THIS IS NEAT! I MIGHT GET IDEAS FOR A STATUE!
STARE
SHE'S CUTE... YOU STUD YOU!
YOU MISUNDER-STAND. IT ISN'T LIKE THAT.
DON'T BE BASHFUL. NOW THAT YOU'VE FOUND SOMEONE SPECIAL...
...LET ME TELL YOU SOMETHING.
!
WHUP

WHISPER
WHISPER
WHISPER
NO. REALLY.
SHAKE
SHAKE
?!!
WHISPER
WHISPER
GRAAH
TRMBL
TRMBL
HOW CAN YOU DO THAT IN YOUR TEENS. YOU PERVERT!!
YOU IDIOT!! YOU LECHER!! YOU'RE UNCLEAN!!
YOUR VIRGINAL REACTION IS DISGUSTING.
SIGH
SHUT UP. YOU UNDERAGE BOY!!
!!!!
TRY IT OUT ONCE.
IGNORANCE IS BLISS.
HOW NICE...
BOYS SURE DO ENJOY HORSING AROUND.
CHUCKLE
THOK
POW
GRAAAH
HUH? WHAT'S AGURI GOT TO DO WITH IT?
I WON'T EVER LET AGURI COME NEAR THIS PLACE!!


WHAP
!!
WAAAAAAH!
SWIP
!!
THAT THING FROM BEFORE!!!
WHOOSH
KTUNK

.....
WHAT THE HECK?!
SILENCE
!
GONE ALREADY ?
A D-DEMON...
...REALLY DID APPEAR!
TH-THAT WASN'T THE PLAN!
OH...!
UH. UM...
PLAN?
.....
?!
THIS IS ALL A RUSE THAT WE SERVANTS OF HOUSE KASUGA PLANNED!
BOW
OFFICER! MISS! I'M SO SORRY!

TO WEAKEN...
...THE MASTER'S FAITH!
WHAT FOR?
A RUSE?!
REALLY?!
OFFICER, THE STRANGE VOICE YOU HEARD YESTERDAY WAS THE MASTER PRAYING!
...HAS BECOME ABNORMAL!
...BUT HIS FERVOR IN RECENT YEARS...
HIS WORK IS EVERYTHING TO HIM.
HE'S ALWAYS HELD A DEEP BELIEF IN DOJIN-SAMA...

HE MAKES STRANGE SOUNDS BEFORE THE ALTAR AND BEATS HIMSELF AGAINST THE FLOOR AND WALLS!
EVEN THE RESIDENT PRIEST IS AFRAID OF HIM...
...AND WANTS TO LEAVE...
SO WE CAME UP WITH THIS PLAN.
DOJIN
FIRST, THE PRIEST WOULD PROPHESY THE MISS'S MURDER...
...AND THEN DISAP-PEAR.
BESIDES, IF WE DID THAT...
...THEN MAYBE HE WOULD CARE FOR MISS KOMAKI MORE!
THEN, IF NOTHING HAPPENED ...
...THE MASTER WOULD QUESTION HIS FAITH.
WHAT...
...DO YOU MEAN?

GRIP
EVEN WHEN...
...MOTHER DIED.
THAT'S ALL HE TALKS TO ME ABOUT.
OFFICER...
...MY FATHER ISN'T INTERESTED IN ANYTHING BUT HIS WORK.
...HE WOULD LEAVE...
...HIS STUDIO.
YES...
...I DIDN'T THINK...
HEH
THAT'S RIGHT...
I HAVE ONLY EVER...
...WATCHED HIM WORK.
I FELT SORRY FOR HER.
.....
THAT IS JUST...
...THE WAY HE IS.

GASP
MISS KOMAKI...
AND I LOST TRUST...
...IN MY FATHER.
UGH
I'M SUCH A BABY!
I'VE SAID TOO MUCH!!
NO MATTER HOW NICE A PERSON THE OFFICER IS...
OH, BUT...
...I DO RESPECT HIM AS A MASTER CRAFTSMAN.
IT'S JUST...
...YOU KNOW... A LITTLE...
YOU...
...HAVE BEEN...
...GREATLY TROUBLED BY THIS.

KLATTR
!
TRMBL
TRMBL
TRMBL
TRMBL
TRMBL
TRMBL

?!
SPROING
WHOOSH
GRAB
!!
WHAM

KCHIK
WHUD
FFT
FFT
FFT
FWISH
SWIP
THWIP
THWIP
SLAM
GYAAAH!

...AND YOU'LL DIE.
MOVE YOUR HEAD THE TINIEST BIT...
WHOOSH
WHUK
UGH...
SHOW YOUR FACE!!
WHUP
WELL DONE, SHIRO! NOW HE CAN'T MOVE!!
!!
YAHACHI !!

YAHACHI! WHY WOULD YOU DO THIS?!
IT'S NOT BECAUSE SHE TURNED DOWN...
...YOUR PERSISTENT ADVANCES, IS IT?!
N- NO!!
THAT'S NOT WHY!!
!
THIS MAN IS DANGEROUS!!
TAKE MISS KOMAKI BACK TO THE MANSION!
O- OK!
I WILL!
N-NO!! DON'T TAKE HER BACK TO THE HOUSE!!
AAGH !!
TMP TMP TMP
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
THE REALLY DANGEROUS ONE...
...IS THE MASTER !!
WHAT ?!

HE CALLED ME IN THAT DAY...!
...DROVE HIM COMPLETELY MAD!
THIS PLAN WE CAME UP WITH...
HUH?
KILL KOMAKI.
I WILL PLACE KOMAKI'S BODY ON THE ALTAR MYSELF.
WE MUST NOT UPSET DOJIN-SAMA.
SHE HAS INCURRED THE WRATH OF DOJIN-SAMA.
...BUT DON'T WORRY...
WE MUSTN'T AROUSE SUSPICION. SO I'LL ASSIGN A GUARD TO HER...
...IS MUCH *MORE* FRIGHTENING.
IT IS A HORRIBLE CHOICE TO MAKE, BUT DOJIN-SAMA FORSAKING MY WORK...

BLAM
I USE THIS WEAPON OF BRONZE THAT I MADE.
IT WILL BE MOST EFFECTIVE.
HE'S CRAZY!
SO I DECIDED...
WHAT ?!
...TO PRETEND TO BE A DEMON, TAKE THE MISS AWAY, AND FREE HER SOMEWHERE!
MASTER !!
TMP TMP TMP
YAHACHI ATTACKED MISS KOMAKI...
...BUT THE OFFICER SAVED HER!
!
OH...?

COME INTO MY ROOM.
YOU'RE SAFE.
FATHER...
TRMBL
COME.
LET'S GO. KOMAKI.
GRIP
I'LL DO IT NOW.
THERE ISN'T A MOMENT TO LOSE!
UNDER-STOOD!
YOU'VE GOTTA GET HER OUT OF THAT PLACE!!

I'M ARRESTING YOU RIGHT NOW.
?!!
YOU'RE LYING. THE MASTER IS DEDICATED TO HIS STATUES.
HE WOULDN'T MAKE SUCH A SOPHISTICATED WEAPON.
HE DOESN'T HAVE THE TIME.
WHERE DID YOU GET IT?
I'VE SEEN SOMETHING LIKE THAT BEFORE.
DID YOU GET IT FROM A BLOND FOREIGNER?
I WON'T TELL YOU! YOU'RE INTERFERING WITH MY PLAN!!
SOON I COULD HAVE DIED WITH HER!! BUT YOU INTERFERED!!

AGH
!!
CLICK
I'LL NEVER TELL!!
WAP
!!
WATCH OUT!!
BOOM
WHUD
UGH
THUD

NGH...
WH-WHAT HAPPENED?!
SOMEHOW, MY BROTHER SOLD THIS MAN THAT WEAPON!
THAT'S THE KIND OF WEAPON MY BROTHER WOULD MAKE...
THE WEAPON HAD A SELF-DESTRUCT MECHANISM?
ANRI, QUIT PLAYING AROUND.
WELL, STEP ONE IS COMPLETE.
HMM...

FWIP
ANYWAY. SHINZO...
IF IT BLOWS UP BUT DOESN'T KILL THE WEARER. IT CAN BE TRACED!!
HA HA HA! I MADE IT UNTRACEABLE.
THIS WAS JUST AN EXPERIMENT. THAT'S IMPORTANT. RIGHT?
...YOU'RE REACHING YOUR LIMIT.
YOUR NECK...
WHY DON'T YOU STOP IT SOON?
I...
...WILL DO ANYTHING...
...FOR YOU.
SHINZO...
.....
DON'T LOOK DOWN ON ME.

BONK
...CREEPING ME OUT.
YOU'RE...
I WON'T FAIL.
UNLIKE YOU, YOU DOG.
I WON'T END UP LIKE YOU.
GRRR
KILL
TUMP
TUMP
HA HA HA HA!
LET'S GO, SHINZO!

FATHER...
SOB
OH... KOMAKI. I'M SO GLAD YOU'RE SAFE!
PLIP
PLIP
?
IS THAT STRANGE?
!
FATHER, ARE YOU CRYING?

I JUST COULDN'T ...!
OH RIGHT... I'M SO...
YOU KNOW HOW I AM...
SHE PREDICTED IT TO ME.
BUT WHEN MOTHER DIED...!
LISTEN...
!!
DON'T BE RIDICULOUS !!
I WON'T ACCEPT IT!! I FORBID IT!!
LOOK AFTER KOMAKI...
I'M SICK. I WILL PROBABLY DIE BEFORE YOU.

I WILL BE SCULPTING...
...AND FROM UP IN HEAVEN...
I'LL BE DAMNED IF YOU DIE FIRST!!
I WON'T WATCH YOU DIE!!
...YOU WILL LOOK THROUGH...
...THE SCULPTURES ...
...AND WATCH OVER ME!
AS EVER...

...YOU WILL DO AS YOU PLEASE.
HEH
THAT'S THE WAY I AM! I CAN'T FACE REALITY!
AFTER THAT, I FLED INTO MY WORK.
I SENSED THAT YOU WERE DISAPPOINTED IN ME.
I WAS SCARED AND RAN FROM THAT, TOO.
I BARELY SPOKE TO YOU.
I'M TRULY SORRY...
FATHER, WHEN SHE DIED, SHE SAID THAT...
...SHE DIDN'T THINK YOU WOULD COME...
...AND THEN...
...SHE LAUGHED.
GASP

SHE WAS *HAPPY.*

FOR THE FIRST TIME
IN TEN YEARS,
I TOUCHED MY FATHER.

HE WAS WARM.
THANK YOU SO MUCH!
I OWE IT ALL TO YOU TWO!
NOT AT ALL! I'M GLAD YOU'RE OVER YOUR FEAR OF MEN NOW!
MY FATHER SAID SOMETHING SURPRISING.
AND MY HARD FEELINGS TOWARD MY FATHER HAVE DISAP-PEARED.

I DON'T REALLY BELIEVE IN DOJIN-SAMA.
WHAT?! THEN WHAT WAS ALL THAT YELLING?!
WELL, IT JUST CLEARED MY HEAD SO MY WORK WENT WELL.
IT DISTRACTED ME. IF I DID IT FOR NO REASON, PEOPLE WOULD THINK I WAS STUPID, RIGHT?
SO I PRETENDED IT WAS FAITH.
WELL, IT WAS...
...PRETTY WEIRD!
BUT I'LL STOP NOW.
NOW THAT I HAVE YOU, I'LL CALM DOWN.
WA HA HA HA HA
MY WORK WILL GO FINE WITHOUT THAT.
THAT'S WHAT HE SAID.

I ONCE HEARD THAT SOMETIMES...
...PEOPLE GO CRAZY ON PURPOSE FOR A DISTRACTION.
IS THAT TRUE?!
YES. A KNOWLEDGEABLE PERSON IN THE DEPARTMENT SAID SO.
FROM NOW ON, YOU CAN THROW YOURSELF INTO YOUR CREATIONS.
LIH-HUH!
IF YOU EVER NEED ANYTHING, JUST COME VISIT.
OK!
OH, RIGHT. I BROUGHT SOME SWEETS FROM TSUBAKIYA. SHIRO LOVES THEM.
SWIP
TH-THUMP
OOH!!
HOW NICE!!

LIKE THIS WAS UNNECESSARY! DON'T TREAT ME LIKE A FOOD SERVICE!!
YOU'RE ONLY NICE TO ME AT TIMES LIKE THIS!
I'M SO HAPPY!!
I LOVE IT WHEN YOU ACT LIKE THIS!!
GLOMP
OFFICER YAMADA IS PERFECT!
CHUCKLE
I MEAN SOMETHING DEEPER...
...HIS BODY OR MUSCLES...
...OR ANYTHING LIKE THAT.
AND I DON'T MEAN...
FUMP
AGH!
SLIP
THAT'S WHAT I THINK.

OH. SORRY.
ARGH!! YOU'LL MESS UP THE SWEETS!! QUIT ROMPING AROUND!
M-MISS KOMAKI !!!!
SPURT
I JUST SAW ALL KINDS OF MUSCLES !!!!
GROAR!! I HAVE GATHERED EVERYONE'S MUSCLE POWER!!
GROOAAR
END
MISS KOMAKI !!
ACK! I COUGHED BLOOD!!!
IT SEEMS HER MUSCLE FETISH WASN'T CURED AFTER ALL...

CHAPTER VI
FLOWERS OF THE HEART

PEOPLE WILL HEAR.
DON'T YELL.
STAB
STOP IT! STOP IT!!
N-NO!!
ONE LEG IS FINE.
IT'S ALL RIGHT. I JUST WANT TO EAT A LITTLE MEAT.
-IGAAA

ANOTHER MURDER.
POLICE DEPARTMENT
THIS BOY'S CORPSE HAD BITE MARKS ON IT, TOO.
THE DIRECT CAUSE OF DEATH WAS KNIFE THRUSTS TO THE ABDOMEN...
...BUT AFTERWARD, THE KILLER CHEWED ON HIM.
NOTHING WAS CHEWED OFF, THOUGH.

I'M SECOND OFFICER SAOTOME!
AGREED.
THAT MAKES IT SOUND LIKE SAOTOME IS A PERVERT...
WE SHOULD PUT PERVERT MASTER SAOTOME IN CHARGE OF THIS CASE!
WE'VE GOT A SERIAL KILLER HERE... AND A REAL PERVERT!
YOUNG MEN AND BOYS... THIS IS THE SIXTH ONE!

...GET BIGGER...
...WITHOUT YOU NOTICING?
YOU KNOW HOW MOLES...
QUESTIONING

DIDN'T YOU KNOW? THE POISON ENTERS THROUGH YOUR FEET...
...AND EVENTUALLY AN EGGPLANT COMES OUT OF YOUR MOUTH AND YOU DIE.
THAT MEANS AN INFECTION BY WOODEN CLOGS.

YOU UNDERSTAND THAT, RIGHT?
SO WHEN I TRIED TO SUCK WOMEN'S BREASTS, IT WASN'T INDECENT ASSAULT!
THE ONLY CURE IS TO DRINK BREAST MILK.
SAOTOME'S WORK ALWAYS INVOLVES A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT WORLD...
.....
LACK OF AFFECT? AN ANTISOCIAL PERSONALITY?
DELUSIONS?
HMM... I SEE...
SKRK SKRK
I'M HAVING A NUMBER OF DIFFICULTIES.
HUH? DIFFICULTIES?
HMM. WELL ABOUT THAT BITER... UH... ...I'M AT A LOSS.
OH. KOJIRO.
WHAT DO YOU NEED?
HELLO. SAOTOME.
ABOUT THAT SERIAL KILLER...
OK...
YEAH. WANNA SEE? IT'S A REAL PAIN.

NO, MA'AM!! WHATEVER HAPPENS, YOU MUST NOT POISON YOUR HEART!
SHUT UP!! HE HASN'T CHANGED!! HE'S A KILLER!!
GLANCE
SET HIM FREE?! AFTER WHAT HE DID TO MY DAUGHTER?! HE SHOULD HANG!!
HE SHOULD STUDY AT MY PRIVATE SCHOOL AND RETURN TO SOCIETY!!
YOU MUSTN'T LET BELIEF FADE FROM YOUR HEART!! HE LISTENED TO MY PREACHING FOR ONE YEAR AND HAS BEEN REBORN!
...YOUR DEPARTED DAUGHTER WOULD WEEP!!
DESPITE SUFFERING, YOU MUST ABANDON HATE AND LEARN TO FORGIVE!!
NOTHING COMES OF HATRED!!
IF SHE SAW YOU NOW...

FOR YOUR OWN SAKE AS WELL AS YOUR DAUGHTER'S !!
WAAAH!
WHO IS THAT MAN?
A FAMOUS DO-GOODER NAMED YUGAMI.
BECAUSE OF HIS GOOD ACTS. SOME CALL HIM A LIVING GOD.
YES.
OH. I'VE HEARD OF HIM. HE COUNSELS CRIMINALS AT THE DEPARTMENT.
TO BE HONEST. HE'S A PROBLEM. ASIDE FROM THE COUNSELING. THAT IS.
HE ALWAYS WANTS TO RELEASE OFFENDERS WHOM HE THINKS HAVE REFORMED IN THEIR HEART.
BUT THE EVEN BIGGER PROBLEM IS...
YOU'RE ABSOLUTELY RIGHT!!
THE DETENTION OFFICER IS ONE OF HIS FOLLOWERS.
I'LL CONSIDER RELEASING HIM!!
YES! WE MUST BELIEVE!!

KOJIRO LIKES CATS.
I'LL... SEE WHAT I CAN DO.
TAKE THIS.
MEOW-MEOW HEAVEN
Pet the kitties!!
TICKET
HUH ?!
CAN YOU DO SOMETHING ABOUT HIM?
I WILL COMPENSATE YOU, OF COURSE!

THE NEXT DAY.
WELL, HERE I AM AT YUGAMI'S SCHOOL...
IS THIS A BUILDING?
YUGAMI PRIVATE SCHOOL

EXCUSE ME...
...DO YOU HAVE BUSINESS HERE?
OH, UH... I'D LIKE TO SPEAK WITH MR. YUGAMI.
HE LOOKS LIKE A GIRL...
ALLOW ME TO ESCORT YOU.
MY NAME IS TSURUGA. I DON'T HAVE ANY FAMILY. SO THE SCHOOL TAKES CARE OF ME.
THANK YOU.
THIS WAY, PLEASE.
BOO!
GAH!!!
FWIK
GACK

BUT HE'S BLEEDING FROM HIS EYES!!
THE BIRDS HE'S WEARING ARE STUFFED. SO DON'T WORRY.
OH, THIS IS MATSUKICHI. HE'S MY FRIEND.
NO. IT'S JUST MY IDEA OF STYLISH MAKEUP!
GYA HA HA!
SPLOSH
TOK
TOK
THIS WAY. PLEASE.
KA HA HA HA!
THAT'S STYLISH?!
SHNK
SHNK

THERE ARE ALL KINDS OF PEOPLE HERE.
YES. THEY'RE ALL FORMER CRIMINALS OR PEOPLE WITHOUT FAMILIES.
YUGAMI-SENSEI TEACHES THEM TO WORK SO THEY CAN REENTER SOCIETY.
...BUT IT'S HARD TO MAKE A LIVING THAT WAY. SO I'M LEARNING TO DYE.
I WANT TO BECOME A PAINTER...
OH, A PAINTER! THEN YOU MUST HAVE A BUNDLE OF PAPER!
YES, FOR SKETCHING.

THIS IS YUGAMI-SENSEI'S ROOM.
COME IN.
THANK YOU.
RATTLE
EXCUSE ME...
!!
OH. A VISITOR?
PLEASED TO MEET YOU. I'M KOJIRO YAMADA.
I'VE COME TO TALK.
ROLL
SH-SHIRO!!
HM...?
OFFICER ...?

HM? YOU'RE AN ACQUAINTANCE OF SHIRO'S?
YES. A FRIEND. I'M SORT OF BURDENED WITH HIM...
WHAT A COINCIDENCE. I'VE BEEN TAKING CARE OF HIM FOR A FEW DAYS, TOO.
HUUH ?!!
I FOUND HIM PASSED OUT IN THE STREET FROM HUNGER.
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?!
UM...
YES...
GRRROWL
WHIMPER
!!!
TH-THUMP
MOTHERLY INSTINCTS BAROMETER
0
100
SUCH A DELICATE CHILD...
SOMETIMES I GIVE HIM MEALS AND SWEETS.
THERE, THERE...
MNCH
MNCH
HE'S TOTALLY FOOLED YOU. HE MAY LOOK LIKE A FOX SQUIRREL. BUT INSIDE HE'S A GOD WARRIOR.

SMIL
...TASTES SCRUMP-TIOUS!
THIS DAIFUKU YUGAMI-SENSEI MADE...
GLANCE
キラ
OH? BUT HE'S SO QUIET AND WELL-BEHAVED...
TH-THUMP
ズキュン
MOTHERLY INSTINCTS BAROMETER
0
100

HE'S TRICKING YOU, MR. YUGAMI!! HE'LL CAUSE THE SEVEN DAYS OF FIRE!! IS THAT WHAT YOU WANT?!!
YAY!
HERE!
HERE!
HERE!
ホーラ
ホラホラ
DON'T HOLD BACK!!
HAVE ALL YOU WANT!!

!!!
THAT LITTLE SHIT!!!
HE'S PLAYING A CHEAP TRICK TO GET FOOD!!
フッ SMIRK

SORTA JEALOUS
JUST LOOK AT HOW MUCH HE LIKES MR. YUGAMI!!
WHEN I'M CARING FOR HIM HE SPITS OUT ECTOPLASM LIKE ROTTEN MACKEREL!!
FWOOO
HEY...
...YOUR HAND STOPPED!!
GRAAAH
S-STOP, OFFICER YAMADA!! YOU'RE SCARING HIM!!
SHIRO, YOU BASTARD !!!
EEK!
SHUT UP!! THIS SLOVENLY GOD WARRIOR JUST WANTS FOOD!!
DON'T LOOK LIKE "HA! HA! GOT YOU!" WITH IT ALL HANGING OUT!
...AND HAS A TRIUMPHANT LOOK ON HIS FACE.
AND I JUST NOTICED HE ISN'T WEARING A LOINCLOTH...
YANK
YIKES!
TODAY, I'VE FINALLY HAD ENOUGH!!
I'LL WRAP YOUR PRIVATES IN MY HAND TOWEL!!

TUG
WAH!
YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE SO ROUGH!!
THEY WERE LIKE A GRANDFATHER WHO PAMPERS HIS GRAND-DAUGHTER AND A MOTHER WHO CAN'T STAND IT.
DON'T GIVE HER SO MUCH CANDY!
OH, IT'S OK SOME-TIMES!
THAT DOESN'T JUSTIFY SUCH A HEAVY HAND!!
TUG
TUG
TUG
PAMPERING WILL ONLY ENCOURAGE HIM!!
TRUST ME. HE CAN HANDLE IT!!
...PLEASE. STOP.
UM...
.....
WE'LL TALK CALMLY NOW.
YEAH... SORRY.
IT'S OK. YOU WERE COOL. LIKE YOU WERE DO NG MEN'S SYNCHRONIZED SW MMING
OH... SORRY.
CENSORED
SHIRO WAS PEEVED.
.....

I SEE. YOU DON'T WANT ME TO RECOMMEND RELEASING PRISONERS.
YES. THAT IS A DIFFICULT DETERMINATION TO MAKE.
IT BELONGS IN THE HANDS OF SPECIALISTS.
SOME OFFENDERS TALK AS IF THEY TRULY BELIEVE THEIR LIES. THEY *APPEAR* TO HAVE REFORMED. BUT-
YOU POLICE ARE ALWAYS LIKE THAT!!
NOTHING COMES FROM SUSPICION!! YOU MUST BELIEVE IN THEM!!
I... I'M NOT FINISHED SPEAKING Y-
WELL, I'M FINISHED LISTENING !!
MOST CRIMINALS COMMIT THEIR CRIMES BECAUSE THEY WERE RAISED IN UNFORTUNATE CIRCUMSTANCES!!
THEY NEED TO BE *SAVED!*
THAT'S TRUE, BUT THERE ARE ALL KINDS OF-
SILENCE! ALL HUMAN BEINGS ARE ORIGINALLY GOOD!! I CAN SAVE THEM!!

.....
OPEN YOUR HEART!!
YOU ARE STILL YOUNG!!

YES, YOU DO THAT.
I WILL COME HERE AGAIN.
SWIP
YU-GAMI-SENSEI!

OH! IT LOOKS GREAT!
LOOK AT THE BOWL I MADE!!

I BELIEVE IN PEOPLE, TOO. BUT A MISTAKE...
...WILL HURT PEOPLE.

OH, OLD MAN TANAKA!
MM..
TOTTER

TOTTER
REALLY?! GREAT!
WITH SKILL LIKE THAT. I CAN INTRODUCE YOU FOR A JOB.

THE FLOWER IS SAYING SOMETHING...
NO. THAT'S ALL RIGHT.
TANAKA, YOU'VE GOTTA DO MORE THAN JUST RAISE FLOWERS!
IT LOOKS LIKE IT WILL BLOOM SOON, TANAKA.
HE'S STUBBORN...
...BUT EVERYONE RESPECTS HIM.
WHEN IT BLOOMS, WE'LL TAKE IT TO MARKET! GREAT WORK!
GREAT WORK...?
ABSO-LUTELY!
.....
THANKS TO YOU...
...I COULD GROW...
...AND BLOOM.
RATTLE
WE'LL BE LEAVING NOW.
OK.
LET'S GO, SHIRO.

.....
STARE
TUMP
TUMP
GRIN
I WAS IMPRESSED.
MR. YUGAMI IS A GOOD PERSON.
YES...
...HE IS.

BUT I THINK IT'S DANGEROUS...
...FOR HIM TO COUNSEL CRIMINALS.
WHY IS THAT?
IT'S EASY FOR VILLAINS TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF IDEALISTS.
IT'S RARE. BUT SOME VILLAINS CAN CAPTIVATE ANYONE.
IT SPELLS TROUBLE IF SOMEONE LIKE THAT TRICKS YOU.
YES.
THERE'S A MAN THERE WHO COUNSELS CRIMINALS.
YOU'RE GONNA TRICK HIM?
SLOSH

HE HAS A TON OF DOCUMENTATION ON CRIMINALS.
THEY COULD BE USEFUL IN MY HUNT.
THAT'S WHY I'M DYING MY HAIR.
BLOND HAIR WOULD STAND OUT.
SPLOSH
SPLOSH
IT'LL WORK. YOU CAN TRICK ANYONE. THEN THEY FOLLOW YOU TO RUIN.
SPLASH
HUH?
IS THAT WHAT YOU'RE DOING?
PROBABLY. EVERYONE SAYS I HAVEN'T GOT LONG... THAT YOU'VE TOTALLY ENTHRALLED ME.
THIS IS RAPIDLY SPREADING FROM MY NECK.

VOYCSACHOOLIAMOOLINL
SCHOOL
SHNK
SHNK
DON'T WORRY. IT WILL CONTINUE TO DO SO!
HA HA HA!
TWANG
PEACH AND CHERRY BLOSSOMS ...
ALL THE FLOWERS...
...IN FULL BLOOM...
FWISH
LOOKING DOWN...
...FROM MT. KIYOSE ...
?
FWIP

SUCH A SWEET VOICE FOR A MAN...
CLAP
CLAP
TWANG
HEH
ARE YOU FROM AROUND HERE? I DROPPED MY WALLET AND LOST EVERYTHING.
CAN I STAY HERE UNTIL I SAVE SOME MONEY?
UH...
...S-SURE...
TH-THUMP

HOW UNFORTUNATE. COME WITH ME!
OF COURSE YOU CAN!
THANKS!
WHAT A SUCKER...
MAKE YOURSELF AT HOME.
THANK YOU. IT'S A BIG HELP.
THERE'S A LOT OF PEOPLE HERE.
WHAT IS THIS PLACE?
OH. WOW!
RA HA!
OH, IT'S NOTHING!
IT'S A SCHOOL I ESTABLISHED TO REHABILITATE THEM FOR SOCIETY.
THIS PLACE IS *FULL* OF STRAPPING MEN!
JUST HEARING ABOUT IT REEKS OF *BEEP.*
WHAAAT?!

IT SEEMS YOU'RE TOO YOUNG TO KNOW PROPER ETIQUETTE.
TAKE A SEAT.
FUMP
YOU SURE ABOUT THAT?
NO... NO THANKS.
YES...
YOU GUYS ALL RIGHT? YOU'RE NOT *BEEPING* EACH OTHER AT NIGHT ARE YOU? SHOULD I BRING SOME WOMEN?
HE SAYS MY HOUSE SMELLS LIKE *BEEP* ?!!
BLAH
BLAH
LISTEN. PEOPLE MUST ALWAYS BE POLITE. THAT MEANS RESPECTING OTHERS AND...
30 MINUTES LATER ...
TO SUM UP. PEOPLE MUST BELIEVE IN EACH OTHER. UNDERSTOOD?
.....
.....
AND?
HUH?!
...SO I'LL FEEL AT EASE AROUND YOU. RIGHT?
YOU WANT IT TO RESONATE WITH ME...
THAT WAS A TYPICAL SPEECH.
DON'T PLAY ME, OLD MAN.
WAS HE EVEN LISTENING ?!
AND? AND WHAT?!

KRIK
I'LL PROCURE US SOME CHICKS.
WHAAAT?!!
HE GOT BORED AND HORNY?!!
I GOT BORED AND HORNY WHILE YOU WERE RUNNING ON.
WH...
WHAT?!
ZING
GRIP
NO, YOU CAN'T!! THIS IS MY SCHOOL! YOU CAN'T BRING PROSTITUTES HERE!!
HUUUH?
うおおお
GRAAAH
LET GO OF ME!! WE MUST OPERATE IMMEDIATELY! IT'S A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH!!
IT DOESN'T CHANGE ANYTHING. TALKING LIKE A DOCTOR!! YOU'RE INCORRIGIBLE!
GRAB
NO PROS? THEN I'LL SNAG US SOME AMATEURS.
THAT'S EVEN WORSE!! EVERYTHING YOU WANT IS BAD!!! JUST STOP FOR A SECOND!!!
WOBBLE

WAP
GAH!!
.....
FUMP
ぼたっ
PLOP
ゴロ
!
ズル
SLIP
GACK
ビリッ
WAS THAT A BONE YOU JUST HID?
YOU WERE GRIPPING THAT WHEN YOU WERE UPSET.
IT MUST BE IMPORTANT.
OH, UH-HUH.
IT'S MY LITTLE BROTHER'S BONE.
YUTA'S?
N-NO!! THIS IS YUTA'S.
YES...
ARE YOU SOME KIND OF BONE FREAK?
IT'S... IT'S...

...BUT I CARRY AROUND MY BROTHER'S BONE.
IS IT CREEPY? EVERYONE CALLS ME "SENSEI"...
.....
WHY? SEEMS OK TO ME.
WHAT'S WRONG WITH IT?
HUH...?
.....
YOU NEED THICKER SKIN. AND DON'T PUSH YOURSELF TOO HARD!
HA HA HA HA!
I ALWAYS FELT GUILTY AND HID IT...
.....
HA HA HA! RIGHT. IF YOU THINK ABOUT IT...
...IT'S NOT A BIG DEAL.
HA HA...
HA HA...
...BUT HE JUST SHRUGS IT OFF WITH A LAUGH.

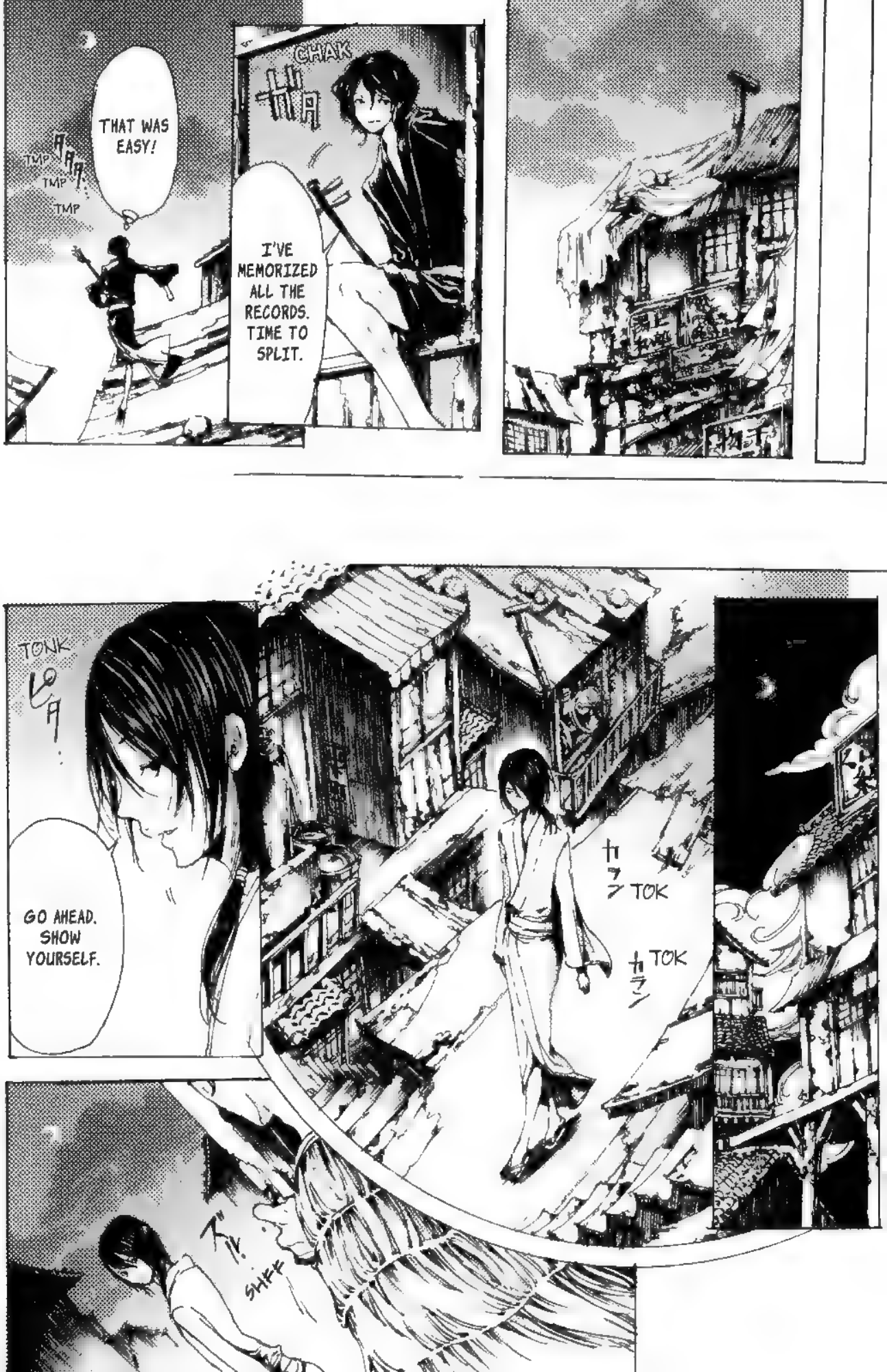
MY DEAR BROTHER WAS ABOUT YOUR AGE WHEN HE DIED.
LIKE YOU. HE WAS CAREFREE.
DESPITE ALL MY ACTIVITIES, I'M NOT VERY GOOD WITH PEOPLE.
MY VOLUNTEER-ISM WEARS ME OUT SOMETIMES.
I KEEP HIS BONE WITH ME FOR SOLACE.
THANKS TO YOU, I FEEL RELIEVED ABOUT IT.
HA HA HA!
WHAT'S YOUR NAME?
BOTAN.
HMM... WHAT NAME SHALL I USE?
I'LL USE AN OLD NICKNAME.
BOTAN? THAT'S ODD. AND THAT'S...
...THE SAME NAME AS AN AWFUL CRIMINAL ONLY KNOWN TO THE POLICE.
TA-DUM
YEAH, I'M *THAT* BOTAN.
HUH? NAH... BOTAN WAS A FOREIGNER, AND NO INNOCENT YOUTH LIKE YOU!
ANYWAY...

.....
HA HA HA!
HA! YOU'RE A GHOST, THEN?!
YEAH. THAT HURT.
...THE POLICE KILLED HIM A WHILE BACK.
SMIRK
SKRK
SKRK
HE'S NICE-LOOKING.
HE'S FIT... WITH FIRM MUSCLES.
MATSU-KICHI...
...THERE'S A NEW GUY.
GNAW
GNAW
TATMP
I BOUGHT CANDY!
HI, BOTAN!
THREE DAYS LATER.
WONDER WHAT THEY'D FEEL LIKE TO BITE
SKRK
SKRK

...I CAN'T TAKE MY EYES OFF OF HIM.
BUT IT'S TRUE...
HA HA HA
YOU IN LOVE WITH HIM? HA HA HA
YUGAMI-SENSEI, YOU FAWN ALL OVER BOTAN!
OH. THANKS!
WAHH! DON'T BE RIDICULOUS !!
I CAN RELAX AROUND HIM.
HE'S THE ONLY ONE WHO DOESN'T TREAT ME LIKE A SAINT.
YUTA LIKED THAT CANDY.
HEY, YUGAMI!
HE WOULD STARE AT IT AND SAY, IT'S PRETTY HOW THE LIGHT SHINES THROUGH IT.
ISN'T IT NEAT HOW THE LIGHT SHINES THROUGH?
LOOK! THEY LOOK PRETTY STUCK ON THE WINDOW!

I KNOW YUTA HASN'T COME BACK...
BOTAN, YOU GOT THE WINDOW ALL DIRTY!!
WHAT A CHILDISH THING TO DO!
NO, IT'S COOL!!
HA HA HA HA!
I MADE SOME DAIFUKU!
OH, THANKS!
ALLOW ME TO WASH YOUR BACK.
THANK YOU!
...BUT THIS BOY IS PRECIOUS.
WHATEVER I DO...
...I MUST CARE FOR HIM!!
HUH?
CRIMINAL RECORDS?

RUSTLE
RUSTLE
ALL RIGHT. I'LL SHOW YOU.
I CAN'T SHOW THEM TO ANYONE.
BUT... BOTAN IS HARMLESS.
YES... SOME-TIMES. BUT...
YEAH. YOU VOLUNTEER, RIGHT?
IT'LL COME IN HANDY.
WOW... THIS IS REALLY DETAILED.
FWIP
HE'S JUST LOOKING FOR A THRILL. HE'S STILL A CHILD.
YAAY! THANKS!
HERE THEY ARE.
HEAVEN HAS GRANTED ME THIS CHILD.
I MUST DEVOTE MYSELF TO HIM!!
NOW THERE IS NOT...
...A SINGLE CLOUD IN MY LIFE!
SKRK
SKRK


THAT WAS EASY!
TMP
TMP
TMP
CHAK
I'VE MEMORIZED ALL THE RECORDS. TIME TO SPLIT.
TONK
GO AHEAD. SHOW YOURSELF.
TOK
TOK
SHFF

YOU WERE WATCHING ME AT YUGAMI'S.
YOUR MEAT LOOKS PRETTY AND SOFT...
WE COULDN'T BITE THROUGH ANYONE ELSE...
...BUT PERHAPS YOU...
OH. ARE YOU THAT MURDERER OF YOUNG MEN?
WEREN'T YOU HANGING AROUND A SLENDER GUY?
YES. HE'S JUST A FREAK.
HE LISTENS TO MY FANTASIES. SAYS AMAZING... AMAZING... AND DRAWS THEM.
I'M NOT INTERESTED IN HIS MEAT.

A WOLF KILLED ONE OF MY CHILDHOOD FRIENDS. I CAME ACROSS A HAWK PECKING AT HIM...
WHY ARE YOU INTERESTED IN MEAT?
...AND COULDN'T FORGET IT.
THEN I TOOK AN INTEREST IN MAN-FLESH.
I HELD IT AT BAY FOR A LONG TIME. BUT NOT ANYMORE.
YOU WERE A STRANGE CHILD. YOUR PARENTS MUST HAVE WORRIED.
TWITCH
PARENTS ?
WELL, MY MOTHER HAS ALWAYS BEEN HYSTERICAL...
...AND MY FATHER IS IN CHARGE OF DETENTIONS FOR THE POLICE. HE'S VERY STRICT.
WHEN HE FOUND OUT I LIKE MEN, HE DROVE ME OUT OF THE HOUSE.
IT'S FUNNY, BUT I HEARD THAT...
...HE IS NOW ONE OF YUGAMI'S FOLLOWERS.
HE MUST'VE GONE NUTS.

OH MY...
...I HAVE YOU AGAINST THE WALL.
THE OTHER DAY, I REGRETTED BEING...
...TOO QUICK TO THE KILL.
TODAY, I'LL PROLONG YOUR SUFFERING.
SUBMIT TO ME! CRY AND BEG AND-
ACK!
THUD
HU... H?
SPLUK
BYE.

THUD
TOK
TOK
GUAAAGH-
HA HA HA!! YOU'RE GOOD ENOUGH!!
LET ME EAT YOUR FLESH!!
GRAB
!!
A YOUNG MAN!!
HM? WHAT?
ARE YOU DYING?
PIK
PIK
TWITCH
TWITCH
GRINNN AT-
HUH? WHAT ABOUT MY FLESH?
WHEEZ
WHEEZ

WHACK
OH? MR. YUGAMI?
I NEED YOU TO FIND SOMEONE FOR ME!!
RATTLE
A BOY I WAS CARING FOR NAMED BOTAN HAS DISAPPEARED!!
HUH ?!
HE'S A TRAVELLING SHAMISEN PLAYER WHO WEARS A BLACK KIMONO!
UH-OH!!
THAT SERIAL KILLER HAS TAKEN ANOTHER VICTIM!!
WHOOSH
WHAT?!
AND THIS ONE'S WORSE THAN EVER!

HIS WHOLE UPPER BODY IS BURNT BLACK!
HIS HEAD WAS STUCK IN A NEARBY INCINERATOR!
THERE ARE MARKS SUGGESTING BLOWS TO THE STOMACH.
UH... YES.
TH-THIS WAS THERE?! THIS SHAMISEN WAS?!
WHAT WAS THE VICTIM'S BUILD?!
!!!
THEY FOUND THIS SHAMISEN NEARBY.
!!!
TALL, LANKY, DRESSED IN BLACK.
WE MUST SEARCH FOR CLUES IMMEDIATELY !!
MR. YUGAMI !!
BOTAN... HAS BEEN KILLED!
YES, SIR!
SHUMP
STAGGER
BOTAN...
THAT WAS BOTAN'S SHAMISEN...

HIS HEAD WAS STUCK IN...
BURNT BLACK!
...WHO KILLED BOTAN.
YES... A KILLER... A KILLER...
A KILLER ...?
GASP
RIGHT AWAY...
RIGHT AWAY!
...WE MUST CATCH THE KILLER.
YES...
WHATEVER HAPPENS, YOU MUST NOT POISON YOUR HEART!
TRMBL
TRMBL
AND DO THE SAME THING TO HIM.
RIGHT?
...BUT NOW HE'S OUT THERE LIVING IT UP!!!
HE GAVE BOTAN A FORETASTE OF HELL...

DESPITE SUFFERING, YOU MUST ABANDON HATE AND LEARN TO FORGIVE!!
NOTHING COMES OF HATRED!!
I WILL STICK HIS HEAD IN FIRE AND KILL HIM!!
I WILL KILL HIM THE SAME WAY!!
TRMBL
TRMBL
OFFICER YAMADA... IT HURTS...
I FEEL LIKE I COULD DIE!
KILL HIM... KILL THE KILLER!!
I MUSTN'T LET GO...
M-MR. YUGAMI !!
WAP
UWAAAAAH!
I... MUSTN'T LET GO... OF THIS MAN...
WAAAAAH!

I'M JUST A HYPOCRITE!

IT LOOKS VIRTUOUS, BUT IT ISN'T.

MY PURPOSE WAS THE OPPOSITE OF A TRULY GOOD PERSON'S.

I DECIDED TO HELP PEOPLE WHO ARE SUFFERING.

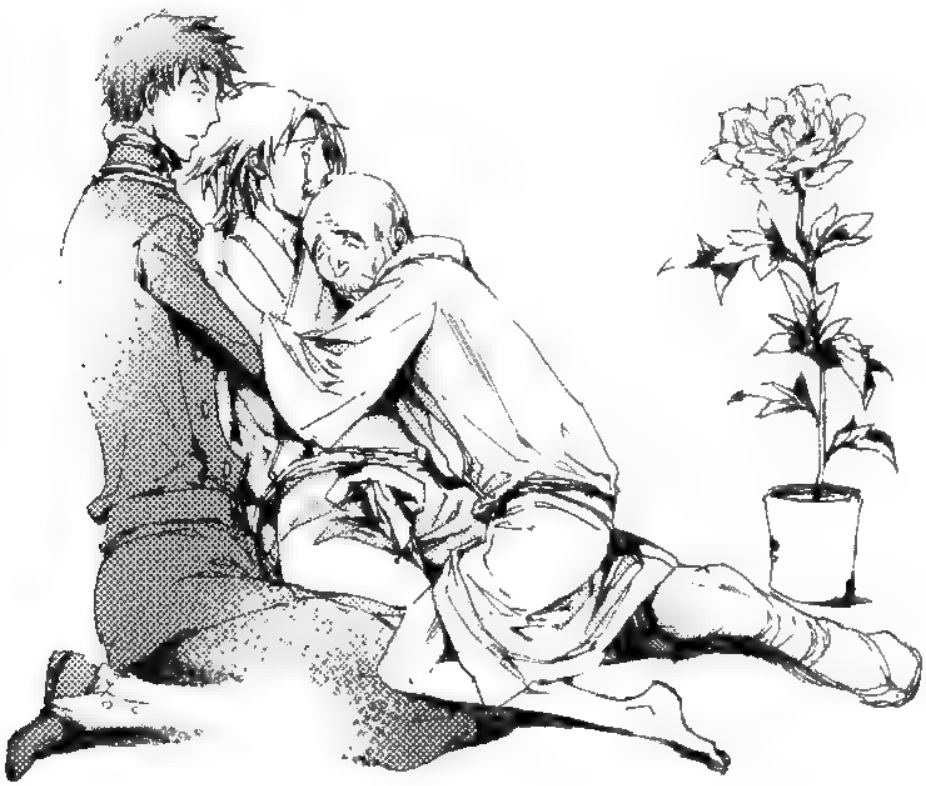
I WAS SO LONELY WHEN HE DIED AND LEFT ME ALONE.

...AND ONLY OPENED MYSELF UP TO MY BROTHER.

I WAS ALWAYS INTRO-VERTED...

I DID IT BECAUSE SUFFERING PEOPLE...
...WOULD RELY ON ME.
I FINALLY FELT AS IF I WERE INTER-ACTING WITH PEOPLE!
IT WASN'T GOODWILL AT ALL!
IT WAS BECAUSE I WAS LONELY!!
ALL MY SERMONS...
...WERE DIRECTED AT MYSELF!
YUGAMI-SENSEI...
!
LIM...
.....
T-TANAKA... AND SAKIO...
HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN STANDING THERE?
A WHILE...

THE FRUIT OF MY HYPO-CRISY!
HA HA HA! LOOK OFFICER YAMADA!
EH...
PARDON ME, BUT OLD MAN TANAKA...
...INSISTED ON SHOWING YOU HOW HIS FLOWER HAS BLOOMED.
TNK
I AM THE SCUM OF ALL SCUM!
I EVEN FOOLED THAT OLD MAN FOR MY LONELINESS!!



IT...
..IS ALL...
...THANKS TO YOU.
I CAN NOW...
...GROW FLOWERS.
THANKS...
...TO YOU...
...I GREW.
GRIP
IT'S ALL...
...BECAUSE OF YOU.
NO. THAT'S ALL RIGHT.
THE FLOWER IS SAYING SOMETHING...

SOB
MR. YUGAMI...
...I MAY STILL BE YOUNG AND NOT UNDERSTAND MUCH...
...BUT EVERYONE HATES...
...AND MISTRUSTS OTHERS SOMETIMES...
YOU DON'T NEED TO CONDEMN WHAT YOU'VE DONE...
...FROM THE GOODNESS IN YOUR HEART.

I SENSED THAT EARLIER...
...AND IT BECAME CLEAR UPON SEEING MR. TANAKA.
...YOU WANTED TO MAKE THE PEOPLE OF YOUR SCHOOL HAPPY.
WHATEVER THE CAUSE...
DON'T GET TOO WORKED UP.
AND KEEP ON LIVING!

.....
DON'T PUSH YOURSELF TOO HARD!
YOU...
...JUST SAID THE SAME THING HE DID.

FWUP
AW MAN...
ANRI, YOU'RE BACK.
HM? WHERE'S YOUR SHAMISEN?
I RAN INTO SOME FREAK ON THE WAY BACK...
...AND DROPPED IT WHILE KICKING HIM.
OH...
YU-GAMI-SENSEI!
!

IT'S BEEN A WHILE.
I'M GLAD TO SEE YOU'RE DOING WELL!
BUT I'M NOT A SENSEI ANYMORE.
OH!
SHIRO AND OFFICER YAMADA!!
YOU AND BOTAN HELPED OPEN MY EYES.
UNTIL NOW, I'VE LET MY DESPERATION OVER MY IMPERFECTIONS DRIVE ME TO ATTEMPT THE IMPOSSIBLE.
FROM NOW ON, I'D LIKE TO BE A LITTLE MORE DOWN-TO-EARTH.
I WON'T RECOMMEND FREEING ANY MORE PRISONERS BASED ON WISHFUL THINKING.

AREN'T I SUFFICIENT FOR YOU?
WHUP
.....
GRRR
YOU ARE NOT...
BEAM
...INSUFFICIENT.
WHAT KIND OF REACTION IS THAT?!
HEY!!
...SO I'M LEAVING HIM TO YOU.
AND I WOULDN'T WANT TO SPOIL SHIRO...
OF COURSE!! NO ONE BUT ME COULD MAKE YOU BEHAVE!
RIIGHT...
OH, THERE'S MR. TSURUGA.
YES, HE GRADUATED.
WHEN HIS FRIEND MATSUKICHI LEFT...
...HE LOST ALL SPIRIT.
HE GAVE UP ON BECOMING AN ARTIST AND DECIDED TO WORK IN A DYE SHOP.
OH, REALLY?

YES. JUST RANDOM CHORES. BUT IN RECOGNITION OF HIS SKILL.
HUH? MR. TANAKA FOUND A JOB?
OH!
TUMP TUMP TUMP
AAH
MR. YUGAMI!! A PICTURE POSTCARD CAME FROM MR. TANAKA'S WORKPLACE!
OH, THERE!
LET'S SEE...
LET ME SEE.
WHERE IS HE?
THERE HE IS!!
PEONY GARDEN
ISHIMURA
OPENING SOON
FROM EVERYONE ON THE
END

SHFF
SHFF
SHFF
WHERE IS IT?
SHFF
WHERE IS IT?
CHAPTER VII
BEAST OF SPRING: PASS OF SEARCHING
LOTS OF PEOPLE ARE LOOKING FOR THINGS...
...AT THE PASS OF SEARCHING.

YES. I KNOW.
BE CAREFUL. FERAL DOGS HAVE BEEN APPEARING UP AHEAD.
RATTLE
HELLO, BOY. ALL ALONE?
WHEN THEY ATTACK, PEOPLE RUN OFF, LEAVING BEHIND THEIR BELONGINGS.
THAT'S WHY THIS PLACE IS CALLED THE PASS OF SEARCHING.
THEN THEY COME BACK LATER TO FIND THEM.
...SO WE MERCHANTS PRAY AS WE PASS THROUGH.
BUT WE HAVE TO USE THIS PASS TO REACH THE MARKET IN THE NEXT TOWN...

IT WAS UNSETTLING ...
LONG AGO, AN INDIGENOUS PEOPLE KNOWN AS THE IRON RING CLAN LIVED HERE. EACH CLAN MEMBER OWNED A BIG DOG.
HUH?
IT MUST BE A CURSE FROM THE IRON RING CLAN.
...SO WE VILLAGERS BANDED TOGETHER AND DROVE THEM AWAY.
THEY LEFT ONLY THEIR DOGS BEHIND.
RE-VENGE... BY DOGS?
DON'T TALK ABOUT THAT, FATHER!!
THE FERAL DOGS HERE ARE DESCENDANTS OF THE IRON RING CLAN'S DOGS.
THEY EXACT REVENGE ON BEHALF OF THEIR FORMER MASTERS.

THAT SOUNDS...
RUSTLE
RUSTLE
...CLOSE!!
RUSTLE..
HM?
WHOOM
GYAAH!
GRRRAAARRR!
!!!
WHUD
WAH!
FATHER!!

WHUP
OH, MY!
ALL RIGHT !!
I... I'LL BE FINE!!
TAKE MY DAUGHTER TO SAFETY!!
FATHERRRRR!!
TUMP
TUMP
TUMP
TUMP
!!
SPROING
EEEEEK!!
STAY HERE AND BE STILL!!
SHTUMP

I SAW A HUMAN FORM BEHIND THE DOGS.
SOMEONE IS CONTROLLING THOSE DOGS!
I'M GOING BACK FOR YOUR FATHER!
SWIP
SHE
.....
SHING
!
WELL DONE.
NO ONE WILL COME IF YOU CALL.
FWISH
THIS IS WHAT COMES OF A STRIPLING LIKE YOU WANDERING AROUND ALONE LIKE HE'S A REAL MAN!
GIVE ME EVERYTHING YOU'RE CARRYING!
SO IT WASN'T REVENGE BY DOGS, BUT JUST A BUNCH OF BEAST-TAMER BANDITS.
YOU SHOWED YOURSELF. SO ARE YOU PULLING OUT OF THIS AREA?

DON'T BE FOOLED BY THE WAY A WOMAN LOOKS, BOY.
YES. TODAY IS THE LAST DAY BEFORE WE MOVE ON. DOGS CAN'T TAKE MONEY, SO I'M DOING IT.
...DON'T YOU BE FOOLED BY THE WAY A MAN LOOKS, GIRL.
OF COURSE...
GRRRIP
EEK!
AIIEE !!
MEN HAVE A BEAST INSIDE.
SHUT UP AND LET ME GO!
I'LL KILL YOU, YOU SNOT-NOSED BRAT!!
!
.....

DID YOU STEAL HIS MONEY?
.....
RUSTLE
WHAT HAPPENED TO THE BOY?
YOU NEVER GAVE THE SIGN. WE'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR YOU.
...HERE SHE IS.
RUSTLE
OH...

WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH YOU? WHY'RE YOU NAKED?
?
.....
A BEAST...
...ATTACKED ME.
HUH?
BUT WE'RE BEAST-TAMERS...
?!!
FLINCH
SHIIIT!

HE LOOKS DOWN ON WOMEN!!
WHAM
I WILL NOT STAND FOR THIS!!
IT'S ALL THAT BRAT'S FAULT!!
IT'S HIS FAULT!!
WE'RE NOT LEAVING!!
WE'RE STAYING HERE AND ATTACKING MORE PEOPLE!
WE'LL STEAL MONEY! AND BLOCK THE PASS! I'LL SHOW HIM!!
A FEW DAYS LATER.
SHIRO...
SOMETHING HAS HAPPENED AT THAT PASS YOU MENTIONED.
OH? HOW SO?

FERAL DOGS WERE APPEARING, SO OFFICERS WERE GOING TO CLEAR THEM OUT.
I TOLD YOU, DIDN'T I?
BUT THE DOG ATTACKS HAVE STOPPED...
...SO WE SUSPENDED THE OPERATION.
I WAS DOWN WITH A COLD, SO I WONDERED...
...IF YOU HAD DONE SOMETHING ON MY ACCOUNT.
.....
OH? YOU FLATTER YOURSELF.
.....
HE'S LYING! HE DID SOMETHING.
I TOLD YOU NOT TO DO ANYTHING DANGEROUS!!
GYAK!
SHAKE
SHAKE

BUT...
...I GUESS...
...I'M GRATEFUL...
...FOR THE THOUGHT.
.....
CHOP
OW!
BUT DON'T EVER DO IT AGAIN!!

HEY!
WHAT'S THE MATTER?
YOU WANTED TO GO ON THE ATTACK. BUT YOU'VE JUST BEEN STANDING THERE FOR DAYS.
IF YOU DON'T ACT. WE WON'T EITHER.
SHUT UP! I'M LOOKING FOR SOME-THING!!

I'M SURPRISED. YOU'RE A DESCENDENT OF THE IRON RING CLAN.
HUH? FOR WHAT?
YOU HAVE IRON RINGS PIERCING YOUR BODY.
THAT'S AN IRON RING CLAN CUSTOM.
I SUPPOSE YOU'VE SUFFERED. I'VE BEEN PERSECUTED MYSELF. SO I UNDERSTAND.
BUT YOU SHOULD LEAD A BETTER LIFE.
SOMEONE IS BOUND TO FIND OUT SOMETIME.
UNGH ...
GRAH
SHUT UP!! DON'T PRETEND TO SYMPATHIZE! I WOULD NEVER TRUST YOU PEOPLE!
YOU DROVE OUT MY ANCESTORS !!

...FOR A GIRL IN TEARS TO BE A BANDIT.
BUT IT ISN'T RIGHT...
I'M NOT FROM AROUND HERE. SO I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THAT...
RIGHT?
HUH?
WELL THEN...
SWIP
.....
BYE!
...BUT I DON'T FEEL LIKE ENJOYING THE FLESH OF A TEARFUL WOMAN TODAY.
USUALLY I WOULD LOVE IT...

BUT HE'S JUST A BRAT!
A BRAT!
A BRAAAT !!!
IT ISN'T RIGHT FOR A GIRL TO BE A BANDIT.
UGH...
THAT BRAT CONSOLED ME LIKE I WAS A LITTLE GIRL!
DAMN HIIIIIM!!!

WHERE IS HE?!
WHY...
...DOESN'T HE COME?!
I'LL QUIT STEALING...
FWUP
...AND I'LL QUIT CRYING!
SOB SOB
.....
SIGH
THIS TRULY IS THE PASS OF SEARCHING.
THE BEAST...
...HAS STOLEN YOU.

ENJOY ANOTHER STORY ON THE THE BEAST OF SPRING THEME...
OH. THANKS FOR COMING.
YOU TWISTED YOUR ANKLE? WHAT WERE YOU DOING? SHEESH!
SHIRO. HE CAME TO SEE YOU.

I NEVER PEEP. I ATTACK HEAD-ON.
YOU WERE JUST TRYING TO PEEP.
IT WAS A TRAGIC ACCIDENT.
THAT'S EVEN WORSE!
!!
SLIP
SHIVER
...BUT MY FOOTING WASN'T GOOD.
A WOMAN MOVED IN NEXT DOOR AND I TRIED TO SAY HELLO THROUGH THE WINDOW...

CALM DOWN, KOJIRO. YOU'RE A POLICE OFFICER.
HEY! LET'S TAKE THIS OUT BACK!
BRING IT!
BIKER
SIGH
I'M BORED BECAUSE I CAN'T MOVE. AND I WANT TO WEEP BECAUSE ONLY TWO ANNOYING GUYS HAVE COME TO SEE ME...

I'M SO BORED. WANNA PLAY FLOWER CHESS?
TUNK
OH, SOUNDS FUN!
HEE HEE HEE!
WE'RE PRETTY GOOD!
FOR A THRILL, HOW ABOUT WE TAKE OFF A PIECE OF CLOTHING EVERY TIME WE LOSE A GENERAL?
HUH?!
STRIP CHESS?!
HEH HEH
I'VE ONLY GOT ON A ROBE AND BELT...
...SO YOU HAVE THE ADVANTAGE.
YOU'RE LYING ABOUT WITHOUT A LOINCLOTH AGAIN!
ALL RIGHT. I ACCEPT THE CONDITIONS.
WHAT?! ARE YOU SERIOUS?!
BUT IF I WIN...
...YOU HAVE TO WEAR A LOINCLOTH TODAY!! AND PUT IT ON YOURSELF! AND AS BEFITS A MAN...
...IT HAS TO BE SIX SHAKU LONG!!

DANGER
IT REQUIRES A THRILLING TECHNIQUE INVOLVING TWISTING AND WRAPPING THE CLOTH.
THE FINAL RESULT IS A MANLY FIGURE FEATURING TWISTS AS AN ACCENT.
WHAT'S A SIX-SHAKU LOINCLOTH?
IT IS DISTINCT FROM THE MORE APPROACHABLE ETCHU LOINCLOTH. PICTURED AT LEFT.
A SIX-SHAKU LOINCLOTH ?!!
LOINCLOTH ETCHU
LOINCLOTH SIX-SHAKU
YOU SEEM PRETTY INTO IT UP THERE!
WHAT'S WITH THOSE ILLUSTRATIONS?
OK... FINE! ARAGAMI, YOU FIRST!!
ALL RIGHT. I'LL PLAY!!
I PLAY 4-6!! SIBERIAN IRIS!!
Wash
I'LL HIT YOU WITH A DOMINATING MOVE!!
VEEN
THE FOOL!! I'M GOOD AT THIS STUFF!!

4 MINUTES LATER.
FWOO
YOU WIN.
BE CAREFUL! HE'S GOOD!!
FWIP
ALL RIGHT. I'M NEXT.
A SIX-SHAKU LOINCLOTH IS RIDING ON IT!
DON'T WORRY, SABUROUTA. I WON'T LOSE!!
YOU DAMN BRAT!!!
YOU NEED PRACTICE. MY VASE IS FULL.
FWIP
FUMP
I'M ONLY WEARING TWO ARTICLES OF CLOTHING... MY PANTS AND LOINCLOTH. SO WE'RE EVEN.
HOW KIND OF YOU.
BUT I WON'T HOLD BACK, OFFICER!!
TUNK
.....

HE INTENDS TO WIN BY WHATEVER MEANS NECESSARY!!
HE MAKES HEARTLESS MOVES WITH A GENTLE EXPRESSION ON HIS FACE.
H-HE...
!!
I PLAY 3-8. WHITE CHRYSANTHEMUM.
TUNK
YOU'RE GONNA LOSE.
I'M A MONSTER WHEN IT COMES TO BATTLES.
YOU GUYS ARE TRYING TO BE COOL, BUT DON'T FORGET THIS IS ABOUT A LOINCLOTH! SO CUT THE POSTURING!
I WILL NOT LOSE.
OOH! FLOWER CHESS!! I WANNA PLAY AGAINST SHIRO!
A-AGURI?!
OH! WHAT'RE YOU DOING, BIG BRO?
GRR
GRR
RATTLE

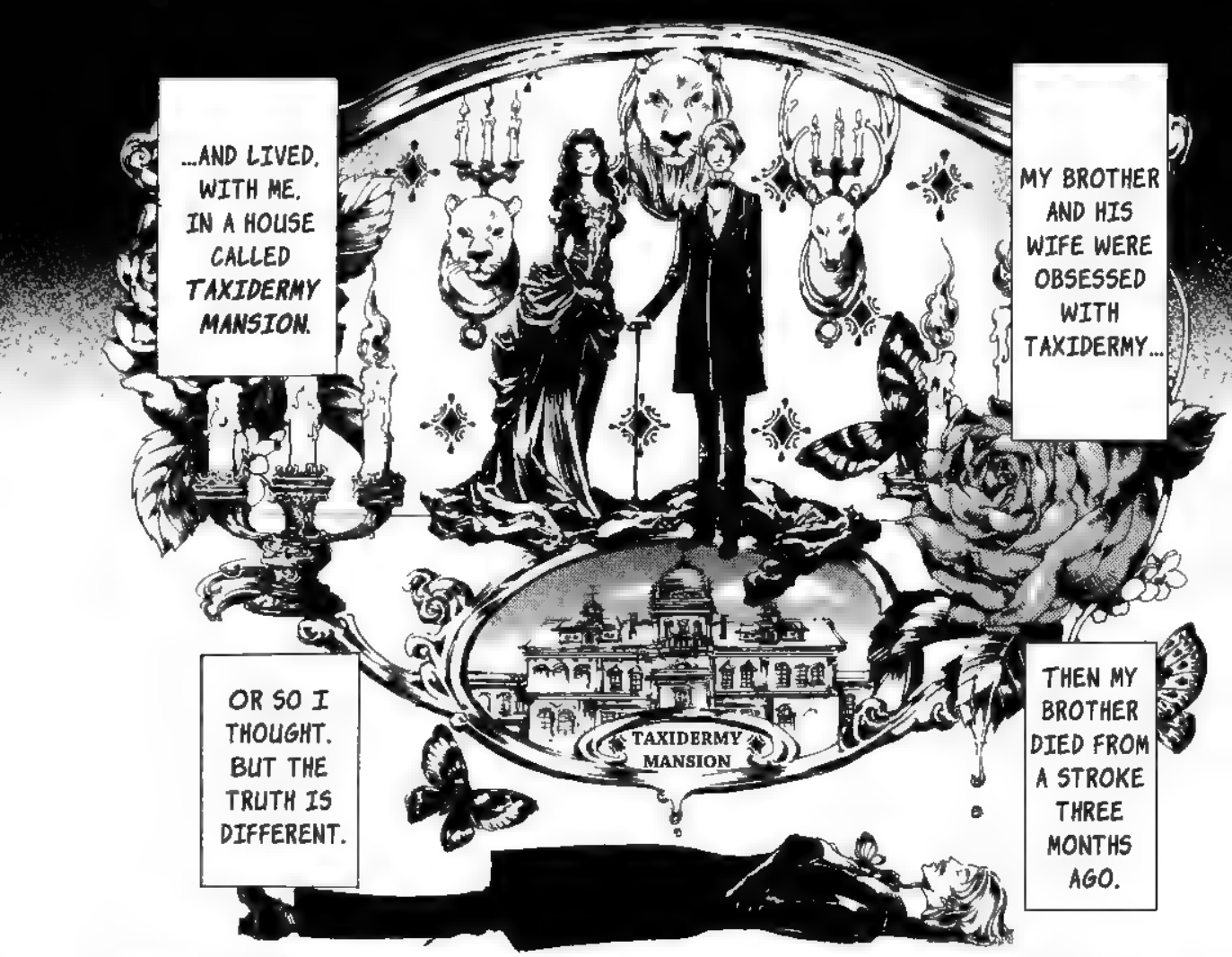
Y-YOU CAN'T!! WE HAVE TO REMOVE A PIECE OF CLOTHING EVERY TIME WE LOSE A FLOWER PIECE.
RIGHT. YOU CAN'T PLAY.
DON'T EVEN TRY. MISS AGURI!!
HUUUH ?
OK, SO IF I LOSE, I'LL UNTIE MY HAIR.
HOW'S THAT?
HER... HER HAIR?!!
WHAT SHOULD I SAY? I REALLY WANNA SEE THAT!!!
DON'T, AGURI!! RETYING IT IS TOO MUCH WORK!
HUH? IT'LL BE FINE!
TH-THUMP
TH-THUMP
LET'S PLAY, SHIRO!
FUMP
SIGH
I DON'T REALLY FEEL LIKE IT. BUT...
SCRITCH
SIIIGH
SHIRO LIKES WOMEN WITH THEIR HAIR DOWN.

SHIRO LIKES WOMEN WITH THEIR HAIR DOWN, BUT HE LIKES EVEN MORE TO WATCH THEM IN THE ACT OF LETTING IT DOWN.
SLAM
HE MADE HIS MOVE!! HE OPENED WITH A GENERAL AGAINST A WOMAN!!!
I PLAY 6-9!! CHINESE PEONY!!
YOU MONSTER!!! YOUR FETISH IS OBVIOUS!!!
WELL PLAYED!! YOU UNDERSTAND MEN'S FANTASIES! THAT PLACID FACE IS THE WORST. BUT OH SO MANLY! INDEED. YOU ARE A MAN!!!
GAWP
OK, MY TURN.
SWIP
HERE!
FWUP
I'VE GOT LOTS OF FLOWERS, SO I WIN!
?!!

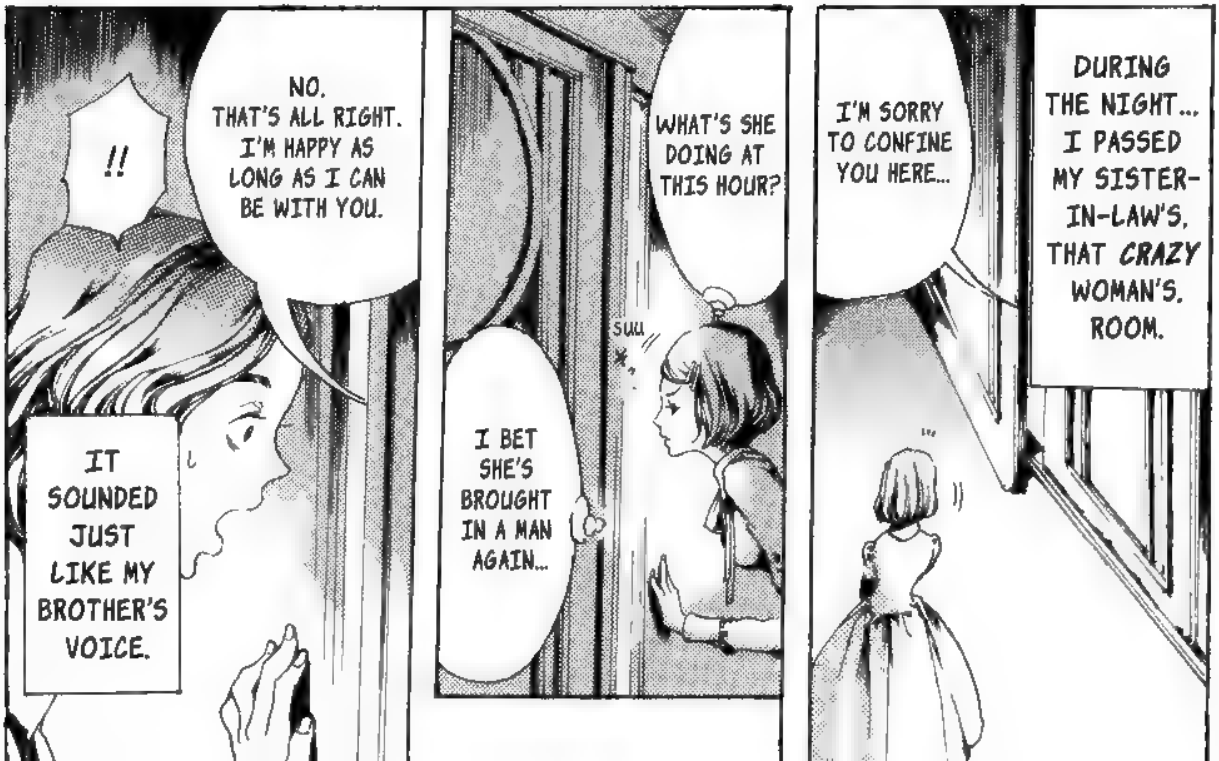
BUT I HAD AN ERRAND TO RUN AND ENDED UP COMING LATE.
OK, BIG BRO!
NOT TOO MANY!
TAKE IT EASY.
BIG BRO AND I PICKED THEM EARLIER FOR YOU!
...SHIRO!!
GET BETTER SOON...
HA HA HA! THEY'RE PRETTY, RIGHT?
HUH?
TEE HEE HEE! YIPPEE!!
YOU... WIN.
SHUMP
END

THE BOSS OF THE HOUSE IS HIS WIFE. WHAT'S WORSE, SHE DOESN'T EVEN LOVE HIM!
HE'S JUST A WALLET.
.....
DON'T WORRY. HE DOESN'T HAVE THE POWER TO FIRE A MAID.
HEY!! HE MIGHT HEAR YOU!!
LET HIM GO. HE'S CREEPY.
HM?
.....
TAK
つき...

CHAPTER VIII


...AND LIVED, WITH ME, IN A HOUSE CALLED TAXIDERMY MANSION.
MY BROTHER AND HIS WIFE WERE OBSESSED WITH TAXIDERMY...
OR SO I THOUGHT. BUT THE TRUTH IS DIFFERENT.
TAXIDERMY MANSION
THEN MY BROTHER DIED FROM A STROKE THREE MONTHS AGO.

I SAW SOMETHING BY ACCIDENT.


!!
NO. THAT'S ALL RIGHT. I'M HAPPY AS LONG AS I CAN BE WITH YOU.
IT SOUNDED JUST LIKE MY BROTHER'S VOICE.
WHAT'S SHE DOING AT THIS HOUR?
I BET SHE'S BROUGHT IN A MAN AGAIN...
SUU
I'M SORRY TO CONFINE YOU HERE...
DURING THE NIGHT... I PASSED MY SISTER-IN-LAW'S, THAT CRAZY WOMAN'S, ROOM.

I SAW MY SISTER-IN-LAW. AND FROM BEHIND, A MAN WHO LOOKED LIKE MY BROTHER.
I WAS CERTAIN THAT MY BROTHER WAS ALIVE. BUT IMPRISONED BY MY SISTER-IN-LAW.
I WAS FURIOUS!
THAT WOMAN HAD TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF MY BROTHER'S WEAKNESS. TO SPEND HIS WEALTH.
SHE IGNORED HIM AND TOOK NUMEROUS LOVERS.
AND NOW SHE DID THIS!!
AS I LISTENED TO THE FOLLOWING CONVERSATION ...
...I TREMBLED AT HER HORRIBLE PLAN!

THE VOICE WAS STRANGE. I COULDN'T TELL IF IT WAS A MAN'S OR A WOMAN'S.
DON'T TURN AROUND.
...SOMEONE HAD A GUN STUCK IN MY BACK.
KCHIK
AND THEN ...
!!!
IF YOU TELL ANYONE WHAT YOU'VE HEARD HERE...
...I'LL THROW YOU IN A CELL AND TORTURE YOU TO DEATH.
...BUT I COULDN'T REALLY TELL.
IT WAS LOW FOR A WOMAN'S, REMINISCENT OF MY SISTER-IN-LAW'S...
NOW RETURN TO YOUR ROOM.
PAT
I WILL ALWAYS BE WATCHING. DO NOT FORGET THAT.
THAT WAS THE BEGINNING OF MY FEAR.
I RAN TO MY ROOM AND HID.

CHAPTER VIII
MEMORY TAX 9 DERMY
CREEPY, HUH? STUFFING PEOPLE...
I WAS SHOCKED WHEN I SAW IT.
NO. NOT A ONE!
HEY, KOJIRO!!
ANY CLUES?

FOUR DAYS AGO, THE PRESERVED BODY OF A YOUNG GIRL WAS FOUND IN A CHRY-SANTHEMUM PARK.
THE GIRL WAS KNOWN AS POISON CHRYSANTHEMUM. SHE WAS A MASTER OF POISONOUS SUBSTANCES WHO HAD ESCAPED ONE MONTH EARLIER.
THE POLICE COULD NOT HIDE THEIR SURPRISE.
AT THE GIRL'S FEET...
...WAS A NOTE READING, "MY ART WILL CONTINUE."
IN ORDER TO PREVENT ANOTHER VICTIM...
...THE POLICE INVESTI-GATED ALL TAXIDERMISTS IN THE AREA.
GYAAAH!! NANMANDABU! NANMANDABU!
WAAA

I MEAN, STUFFED HUMANS! THE OCCULT'S INVOLVED! WE'LL BE CURSED! YOU'RE MY LAST HOPE, JUNJI!!!
TRMBL
TRMBL
PIPE DOWN! HOW LONG'RE YOU GONNA COWER, SABUROUTA?!
RUSTLE
HM?
I HATE THAT STUFF! I REALLY CAN'T STAND IT! I'M FIVE SECONDS FROM PEEING MY PANTS!!!
ANOTHER VICTIM!!
HMPH.
WHAT'S A "FGAWD"?
WHAT THE...?
HUH?

AND SHE'S BEEN STUFFED.
SABUROUTA FOUND HER?
YES.
OOH! I SAW IT!
IT HAD AN AURA!
THE SHOCK HAS PUT HIM INTO MI*-SAMA MODE.
YES. HE'S OFF IN A WORLD OF AURAS...
SAOTOME, WHAT DO YOU THINK?
THIS KIND OF CRIMINAL IS EXPRESSING HIMSELF THROUGH HIS CRIMES.
HE WANTS TO SEE A REACTION, SO HE MUST LIVE NEARBY.
AND PRESERVING HUMAN BODIES IS DIFFICULT. SO HE MUST BE A TALENTED ARTISAN.
HMM... BUT WE ALREADY CHECKED OUT ALL THE TAXIDERMISTS AROUND HERE.
UM, HEAD OFFICER? I NOTICED SOMETHING.
THERE'S PAPER STUCK IN MY BELT. IT LOOKS LIKE A MESSAGE.
YOU'RE TOO SLOW TO NOTICE!! THAT TOTALLY STANDS OUT!!
FWIP

BINGO!
OH, MR. RURI!
WHAT'S MUTSUKUCHI?
MUTSUKUCHI IS IN TAXIDERMY MANSION.
THE PAPER INSIDE WAS SMALL.
SOMEONE IS TIPPING US OFF. IT DOESN'T LOOK FAKE.
MUTSUKUCHI IS A MYSTERIOUS GENIUS TAXIDERMIST. OR RATHER, A SPECIALIST IN ANIMAL PHYSIOLOGY.
HMM...

NOOO! HELP ME, AIKO GI*!!
EVEN THE NAME *TAXIDERMY MANSION* IS CREEPY!!
MAYBE THEY STUFF *PEOPLE* THERE!!
STEEL YOURSELF, SABUROUTA!! THE WAY YOU SCREAM IS SEXY!!
AIIEE
ヒイイイ
SABU-ROUTA, YOU'RE SCARIER!

WHY ME, TOO?!
NOOO! I WON'T GOOO!!!
WHAAAT?!! WE'RE GONNA INVESTIGATE A TAXIDERMIST'S MANSION?!!

DON'T WORRY, SABUROUTA!! WHATEVER HAPPENS, I WILL PROTECT YOU!!
!
DON'T ...
.....
HUG
DON'T BE RIDICULOUS! YOU'RE LIKE MY LITTLE BROTHER!!
I WILL PROTECT YOU. SO YOU NEEDN'T WORRY!!
!
!!!
SABUROUTA, YOU'RE COOL!!
HUH?
.....
TRMBL
TRMBL
TO BE HONEST, I DREAMT OF THE GOLDEN MAN FOR THE FIRST TIME IN A WHILE LAST NIGHT.
IT WOULD BE NICE IF HE'S LIKE YOU.
HUH? I DON'T KNOW WHO YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT. BUT HE'S IN YOUR DREAMS?
WANTS TO BE BABIED MORE.

HE'S SHINING GOLDEN LIGHT AND SPEAKS TO ME...
YES. IN MY DREAM, I'M A CHILD WHO'S DYING.
AND I ASK FOR AN ANSWER...
WHAT... ARE... HUMAN BEINGS?
YOUR EYES WILL PERCEIVE THE TRUTH...
...SO INCREASE IN MIGHT IN ORDER THAT...
...YOU MAY PROTECT THE IMPORTANT ONE.
YOU WILL YET LIVE...
...TO SEE THE WORLD.
WHOA! I DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE THERE!
PEEK
BUT YOU FORGOT, RIGHT?
I DON'T REMEMBER WHAT HAPPENS NEXT, BUT I BET I MET THAT GUY SOMEWHERE LONG AGO.
.....
HEY, DON'T GET TESTY!
IT'S FROM HIS CHILDHOOD, SO OF COURSE HE FORGOT!
DON'T BULLY HIM!
...IF YOU FORGOT IT!
IT MUST NOT BE IMPORTANT...

AS TIME PASSES,
HUMAN BEINGS FORGET WHAT
IS IMPORTANT TO THEM.

WHILE THEY HAVE NO FORM, THE MEMORIES THAT CROSS YOUR MIND...

...CAN INCREASE OR DIMINISH YOUR STRENGTH.

SOME THINGS I CAN'T TELL YOU!

IT SEEMS THAT SHIRO HAS A TROUBLED PAST.

EVEN WHAT WE DON'T WANT TO FORGET...

...EVENTUALLY DISAPPEARS.

...SHIRO'S HEART.

I WISH...

...AND PROTECT...

...I COULD SUPPORT...

TO MAKE A LONG STORY SHORT...

ISHINOMORI MANSION, AKA *TAXIDERMY MANSION.*

...WE NEED TO SPEAK WITH MUTSUKUCHI.
UH-HUH!
I GUESS THERE IS A MUTSUKUCHI HERE...
PLEASE, COME IN. I'LL TAKE YOU TO THE LADY OF THE HOUSE.
MR. MUTSU-KUCHI? UNDER-STOOD!
TUMP
TUMP
TMP
TMP
SWIP
...IS THAT SO?
OH...
MA'AM, THE POLICE ARE HERE.
THEY WISH TO SPEAK WITH MUTSUKUCHI.

スルスルスルー
MY NAME IS KOTORI ISHINO-MORI.
IT IS A PLEASURE TO MEET YOU. I AM THE MANSION'S OWNER

PLOK
PLEASE. DO NOT WORRY.
YOU IDIOT. YOU'LL INVITE EVIL POWERS THAT WAY!!
YOU'RE TURNED ON?
SPURRRT
AIEE!
ELOHIM ESSAIM! ELOHIM ESSAIM!!
GYAAAH! A MONSTER!!
I'M SO TURNED ON!!

I AM A HUMAN WOMAN.
BUT I LOVE TAXIDERMY SO MUCH...
...THAT I WEAR IT ALL THE TIME!
MUTSUKUCHI IS A TAXIDERMIST I EMPLOY. EVER SINCE HE READ ABOUT THE RECENT INCIDENTS IN THE NEWSPAPER...
...HE HAS BEEN EXPECTING YOU.
COME THIS WAY.
CREAK
I WILL TAKE YOU TO MUTSUKUCHI.

WOW...
SO MANY STUFFED ANIMALS!
YES.
THIS IS MY COLLECT-ION.
THERE ARE MANY KINDS OF TAXIDERMY.
MEDICAL MODELS, DECORA-TION...
TEE HEE HEE
...AND MOUNTING OF ANIMALS...
...ONE HAS KILLED HUNTING.
PLCK
ALL OF MINE ARE HUNTING TROPHIES.
HUH?! ALL OF THEM?!

I HAVE KILLED EVERY MANNER OF PREY FROM ACROSS THE GLOBE!!
I HAVE ALWAYS LOVED HUNTING.
IF I COULD, I WOULD EVEN STUFF THE MEN I HAVE CONQUERED!!
WEARING THE LIVING CREATURES THAT I HAVE SUBDUED AFFORDS THE GREATEST PLEASURE!!
WHOA. IT'S FULL OF SMALL SPECIMENS.
IN HERE IS MY DECEASED HUSBAND'S COLLECTION.
PSST
YEAH...
SHE'S PRETTY, BUT A LITTLE OFF...

YES. HIS COLLECTION IS BORING.
HE PRESERVED HIS PET DOG. LITTLE BIRDS. INSECTS...
THIS IS A REFLEC-TION OF HIS BRAIN.
MY HUSBAND PRESERVED HIS MEMORIES THIS WAY.
PRETTY MESSED UP. RIGHT?
...AND EVEN HIS GOLDFISH THAT GOT SICK AND DIED.

I WANT TO STUFF THE ANIMALS I HUNT!
I... I WANT YOU TO STUFF ME, TOO!
THEN YOU CAN REMEMBER ME FOREVER!
THAT WAS LONG AGO.
LET US GO INTO THE NEXT ROOM.
HE WAS A TIMID SOUL...
...WHO LEFT THIS COLLECTION AS THE ONLY EVIDENCE OF HIS LIFE.
IF IT WERE NOT FOR HIS WEALTH, I WOULD NOT HAVE MARRIED HIM.
WE WERE FRIENDLY AS COUSINS, THOUGH.
YOU AND YOUR HUSBAND WERE COUSINS?
YES. WE FIRST MET WHEN I WAS BUT A GIRL.

YEEK! MONSTERRRS !!
WHOA!!
IN HERE. I KEEP FANTASTIC CREATIONS PIECED TOGETHER FROM REAL ANIMALS.
THE HUMAN PARTS ARE FROM WAX FIGURES.

THEY'RE VERY LIFE-LIKE...
THIS IS WHERE MUTSUKUCHI LIVES AND WORKS.
YOU MAY ENTER.
THE HUMAN PARTS COULD BE REAL FOR ALL I CAN TELL!
TUMP TUMP
PARDON US...
MUTSKUCHI! THE POLICE WOULD LIKE TO SPEAK WITH YOU.
OH? I THOUGHT THEY WOULD COME.
I AM MUTSU-KUCHI.
I KNOW ABOUT THE INCIDENTS. BUT I AM NOT RESPONSIBLE.
INVESTIGATE ALL YOU WANT.

SHF
SHF
SHF
DA-ら
DOOM
IT IS TOO SOON TO TELL. OUR DEPARTMENT'S SPECIAL INVESTIGATORS WILL HAVE A LOOK AROUND.
I WOULD LIKE TO ASK YOU SOME QUESTIONS.
MR. MUTSU-KUCHI, OVER HERE, PLEASE.
IT'S ALL RIGHT! I'M NOT GUILTY.
M-MASTER !!
RUSTLE
RUSTLE
PAT
PAT
LIAR.
I UNDERSTAND... I REALLY DO UNDERSTAND HOW YOU FEEL...
I GUESS YOU'VE GOT IT HARD, TOO...
SA●E-SAN
SA●E-SAN
.....
I'M SAOTOME! TAKE THIS AS A TOKEN OF FRIENDSHIP!
FMP

I WAS WATCHING THE OPERA *ANKO OF GREEN GABLES.*
MR. MUTSUKUCHI, WHAT WERE YOU DOING ON THE DAY OF THE FIRST INCIDENT?
.....
SA*E-SAN
HE TOTALLY IGNORED SA*E-SAN!
SOME-THING LIKE THIS.
AND WHAT WAS THE EXPRESSION ON YOUR FACE AT THAT TIME?
NOTHING TURNED UP IN YOUR INQUIRIES EITHER?
NO. NOTHING.
SHALL WE GO?
NO SURPRISE THERE...
HE'S SUPPOSED TO BE THE BRAINS OF OUR SECTION...
THAT GUY...
GOD YOU'RE DUMB.
I SEE...

ANYWAY. THAT TAXIDERMIST'S WORK WASN'T THAT GREAT.
!
THE SECOND VICTIM'S SKIN WAS CAVING IN.
IT PROVES THE TAXIDERMIST'S LACK OF SKILL.
IS... IS THAT REALLY TRUE?
REALLY? WHERE EXACTLY?
?
CAUGHT HIM!
DOES THAT... ...BOTHER YOU?
NO... UH...
I WAS JUST LYING ANYWAY.
?!
WHERE IS YOUR ROOM? PERHAPS YOU HAVE A SPACE UNKNOWN TO YOUR MASTER?
I WILL NOW THOROUGHLY INVESTIGATE YOU.

.....
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?! YOU HAVE RUBBED DIRT IN MY FACE!!!
.....
HEY...
...SURELY YOU DIDN'T...
SHUT UP. YOU OLD MAN!!!
I'M SICK OF PUTTING UP WITH YOU WHILE PLAYING SECOND FIDDLE!!
GRAH
WHOOM
!!!
I'M MORE TALENTED THAN YOU ARE!!
I CAN DO WHAT YOU CAN'T!!
FWIK
WHAT ?!

UGH!
WHACK
TUMP
TUMP
TUMP
YES, SIR!
THE SPECIAL UNIT WILL STAY TO SEARCH THIS MAN'S ROOM.
SORRY FOR THE TROUBLE. WE'LL BE LEAVING NOW!
MUTSU-KUCHI'S PUPIL WAS THE KILLER?!
ALL RIGHT. ARREST HIM!
GOOD JOB, KOJIRO!!
PSST!
?
WHAT A RELIEF!
WE TOOK HIM IN WITHOUT ANY TROUBLE.
KRIK
KRIK
WHEw ...!

NO, YOU LOOK VERY SUSPICIOUS!
WHEEZ
WHEEZ
I'M NO ONE SUSPICIOUS. I JUST CAME TO TALK.
PSST! OFFICER!!
GAH
?!!
IF I'M SPOTTED HERE I'LL BE KILLED, SO I DISGUISED MYSELF.
I'M CHIGUSA. DAISUKE ISHINOMORI, THE DECEASED MASTER OF TAXIDERMY MANSION, WAS MY BROTHER.
THEN IT'S A MIRACLE YOU SURVIVED. YOU STAND OUT MORE THAN ANYONE!
I'M THE ONE WHO STUCK THAT NOTE IN YOUR BELT.
FWIP
WHAT ?!
YOU STILL HAVEN'T CAUGHT THE REAL CULPRIT.
YOU ONLY DID THE SECOND ONE?! SOMEONE ELSE DID THE FIRST ONE?!
OH, SO THAT'S WHAT YOU LOOK LIKE...
YES. I THOUGHT I COULD DO IT TOO BECAUSE OF MY TALENT.

WHAT?! YOU DIDN'T USE PROPER TAXIDERMIC TECHNIQUES?!
I JUST RECEIVED INFORMATION THAT THE SECOND VICTIM WAS NOTHING MORE THAN A CORPSE HARDENED WITH PRESERVATIVE.
MR. RURI!
SO YOU'RE JUST A COPYCAT CRIMINAL?!

I MEAN, I'VE GOT TALENT!! HA HA HA HA HA HA!
BUT I DID A GOOD JOB, DON'T YOU THINK?!
IT'S TRUE! WHEN IT CAME DOWN TO IT, I GOT SCARED!!
HYA HA HA!! YOU FOUND OUT?!

...BUT SHE HAS HIM CONFINED!
I THINK MY SISTER-IN-LAW IS BEHIND IT ALL. MY BROTHER IS SUPPOSEDLY DEAD...
HUH?! WHY?!
BONK
SHUT UP, FOOL!!
DAMN! BACK TO ZERO!!
UGH

TO STUFF HIM.
HER DREAM IS TO PRESERVE THE PEOPLE SHE DOMINATES.
THE FIRST VICTIM WAS A TEST.
AND I THINK SHE IS MUTSUKUCHI.
HUH?! BUT THAT CAN'T BE!
MUTSUKUCHI IS A MYSTERY. MANY DOCTORS AND TAXIDERMISTS CLAIM THAT NAME!
I BET SHE'S THE REAL-
WHOOSH
!!!!
WHAK
BLINK
MM ...

?!
YOU'RE AWAKE, OFFICER?
MRS. ISHINO-MORI?!
THAT GIRL TOLD YOU MY SECRET...
...SO I CAN'T LET YOU LIVE.
SHUF
LOOK. THIS IS MY NEXT SUBJECT.
YES. I PERFORMED THAT EXPERIMENT, BECAUSE I WANTED TO PRESERVE A HUMAN.
SO YOU ARE THE KILLER!!

I LIKE THAT STUFF.
TA-DUM.
SHUT UP! YOU LOOK LIKE YOU'RE IN AN OLD S&M MOVIE!!
WHOA. WHAT'S WITH YOU? YOU LOOK LIKE A POSTER IN SABU. IT HURTS...
LIKE POLICE STRIPPING...
OFFICER...
SH-SHIRO?!!
BE BACK LATER!
WHAT A HARD WORKER, SHIRO!
DIDN'T YOU SAY YOU WERE GOING AWAY TO GET UMBRELLA MATERIALS?!
I WAS LYING. I NEVER WORK.
DON'T YOU KNOW, OFFICER?
ANYWAY, JUST LET SHIRO GO!!
YEAH.
BLUNT
GYAH! YOU IDIOT!! DO YOU JUST GO ANYWHERE WITH ANY WOMAN WHO INVITES YOU?!
DON'T BE SO MACHO ABOUT IT!!
ACTUALLY, SHE INVITED ME TO SPEND THE NIGHT WITH HER.
YES, HE WAS AN EASY CATCH.

PLOK
...THIS BOY.
MY BENEFACTOR HAPPENED TO KNOW...
HE USED TO BE A VICIOUS CRIMINAL.
DA-DOOM
THIS BOY DESERVES TO BE KILLED.
SO YOU DON'T NEED TO WORRY.
HUH ...?
SOME THINGS I CAN'T TELL YOU!!

NOTHING GOOD WILL COME FROM BEING INVOLVED WITH ME.
...SO INCREASE IN MIGHT IN ORDER THAT...
YOUR EYES WILL PERCEIVE THE TRUTH...

...YOU MAY PROTECT THE IMPORTANT ONE.
PRIK
KRIK
URR!
ARRGG!
GRRAAAHH!
KRZZZUH
?!!
IMPOS-SIBLE!!
SNAP
SNAP
TUMP
TUMP
TUMP
TUMP

SKRASH
OFFICER...
YOU'RE AMAZING!!
SHIRO !!
WHUD
-HAAAK

DON'T EVEN *THINK* ABOUT IT!!
WHY DIDN'T YOU RESIST?! IT WAS LIKE YOU *WANTED* TO DIE!
...BUT YOU HAVE HELPED ME NUMEROUS TIMES!
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU DID IN THE PAST...
I KNOW YOU MYSELF!
IT'S LIKE MOCHI!
...WITH MY OWN EYES!
I HAVE SEEN YOU...
AND I...
...BELIEVE IN YOU!!

.....
SLIP
スルッ
SWIP
?!
!
WAP
UNGH...
GASP
NOD
THANK YOU...
GACK
ギクッ
YOU'RE A MAN?!!
LIH-OH!! THE GLASS CUT MY...
THAT HAIR...
MY BROTHER ?!

I HAVE BEEN MY WIFE FOR THREE MONTHS NOW.
I KILLED HER.
YOU'RE RIGHT. I'M SORRY.
YOU WERE WEARING A WIG AND DRESSED LIKE A WOMAN?! YOU WEREN'T CONFINED?!
...AND I JUST SNAPPED!!
WE FOUGHT THAT DAY...
SHALL I DO IT? AFTER A COUPLE OF EXPERIMENTS, I WON'T FAIL.
TMP
WHY DON'T YOU STUFF YOUR WIFE?!
THE MAID SAW IT...
DON'T WORRY, MASTER.
PEEK
GAH
!!
WHO... ARE YOU?
SHE WAS SO UNFEELING. YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO DO THAT, RIGHT?

SHWIP
I PRETEND TO BE A HOUSEHOLD SERVANT SO I CAN OBSERVE PEOPLE.
I AM MUTSUKUCHI. THE TAXIDERMISTS HERE ARE ALL FAKES.
WHAT?!
...BUT I COULD DRUG YOU TO TEMPORARILY APPEAR DEAD.
YES. I COULDN'T FAKE YOUR WIFE'S DEATH BY SICKNESS...
Y-YOU'RE MUTSU-KUCHI?!
ACK
YOU DON'T SEEM TO BE AWARE OF IT...
B-BUT HOW?!
YOU WOULD BE DEAD. BUT LIVE ON AS YOUR WIFE.
...AND YOU WOULD LOOK JUST LIKE YOUR COUSIN AND WIFE!
...BUT YOU WERE ORIGINALLY FAIR LIKE A WOMAN.
SHAVE YOUR MUSTACHE, TRIM YOUR EYEBROWS, AND USE GLUE TO DOUBLE YOUR EYELIDS...

HER VOICE WAS LOW FOR A WOMAN ANYWAY!
...SO A LITTLE DIFFERENCE WOULD BE UNNOTICEABLE!
MAKEUP WOULD PERFECT THE RESEMBLANCE!
SHE ALWAYS HID HERSELF UNDER A MASK...
YOU HAVE A HIGH VOICE FOR A MAN, SO YOU COULD IMPERSONATE HER.
AND YOU COULD SAY YOU CRIED SO MUCH OVER YOUR HUSBAND'S DEATH THAT IT HURT YOUR VOICE.
I WANTED TO STUFF KOTORI SO BADLY...
I GAVE IN TO TEMPTATION...
MY SISTER-IN-LAW!!
CREAK
I SIMPLY PRESERVED HER IN THIS EGG CASE.
WHERE IS HER BODY?!

IF ALL HAD GONE WELL. I WOULD HAVE FINISHED STUFFING YOU SOON!!
TSK! DON'T SAY THAT IN FRONT OF THEM!
?!

WINK
YES. HE EVEN SPENDS TIME WITH ME AT NIGHT.
MY BELOVED LIVES ON INSIDE ME!
HA HA HA! SUR-PRISED?
FWIP
HER PERSONALITY COMES FORWARD DURING THE DAY WHEN MINE IS IN RETREAT.
WINK
...AND WE TALK.
THAT'S RIGHT. I REMOVE KOTORI FROM HER CASE, SIT HER IN A CHAIR...
I'M SO HAPPY WE CAN BE ONE!!
WINK
I LOVE MY HUSBAND DEARLY.
...BUT SHE LOVES ME FROM DEEP WITHIN.
KOTORI IS SO SHY. SHE ALWAYS SAYS THE OPPOSITE OF WHAT SHE FEELS...

MY PARENTS HAD SIX CHILDREN.
I AM THE ONLY FAILURE.
NONE OF THEM CARED ABOUT ME.
THAT'S WHY...
...I AT LEAST WANTED TO REMEMBER MYSELF.
SO I PRESERVED MY MEMORIES.
THEN...
...I FELL IN LOVE WITH KOTORI.
UNLIKE ME, SHE WAS STRONG, PROUD, AND RADIANT!!
I OBSERVED EVERY ASPECT OF HER!! I LEARNED EVERYTHING ABOUT HER!!
I DON'T CARE WHO FORGETS ME AS LONG AS I LIVE INSIDE HER!!
BUT...
I WANT A DIVORCE!!
BUT... KOTORI...
YOU'RE BEING SHY AGAIN. YOU ACTUALLY LOVE ME.
I SAID THAT ONCE, BUT IT WAS A LIE!!

I JUST MARRIED YOU FOR YOUR MONEY!
DON'T TAKE IT TO HEART!!
BUT I SIMPLY LOVE YOU. SO WHY...?
BUT YOU NEVER COME TO ME!!
I KNOW YOU SNEAK INTO MY ROOM AND WATCH ME! IT'S DISGUSTING!!
IT'S CREEPY!! I WANT TO BE WITH ANOTHER MAN!!
I WANT TO SEE YOU! IT'S BECAUSE I LOVE YOU!
...AS SOON AS POSSIBLE!!
I WANT TO FORGET ABOUT YOU...
WE PERSIST NOW WITHIN EACH OTHER.
FUMP
BUT THAT WAS A LIE. WE LOVE EACH OTHER.
FLIK

I LOVE YOU!
I LOVE YOU, MY HUSBAND...
I LOVE YOU, DEAR KOTORI.
AS I AM WITH YOU...
...TO BE ONE WITH HER NOW!
I AM SO HAPPY...

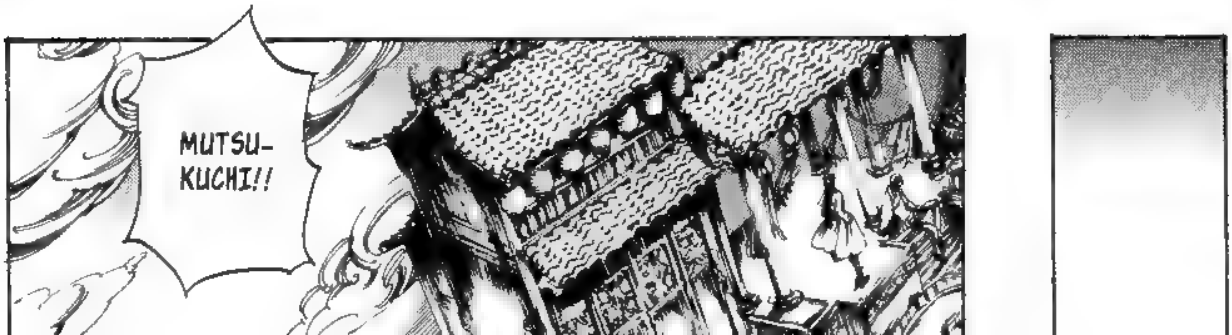
BUT ONCE SHE MARRIES, SHE WILL FORGET ME...
YOUR SISTER RISKED HER LIFE FOR YOU!
A REAL PERSON CARES FOR YOU!
YOU'RE FLEEING INTO DELUSION!

I THINK MEMORIES THAT GIVE YOU STRENGTH...
...WHEN YOU ARE HAVING A HARD TIME...
...THE ONLY ONES YOU ALWAYS REMEMBER?
ARE THE DEEP AND IMPORTANT MEMORIES...

...AND REMAIN VERY IMPORTANT.
...BUT STAY DEEP INSIDE...
...DON'T DISAPPEAR...

WHY DID I FORGET?
CHIGUSA HAS ALWAYS STOOD UP FOR ME.
THAT'S RIGHT.
WHY...?

...AND THE MYSTERIOUS MUTSUKUCHI DISAPPEARED.
LATER, THE POLICE ARRESTED DAISUKE ISHINOMORI ...


MUTSU-KUCHI!!

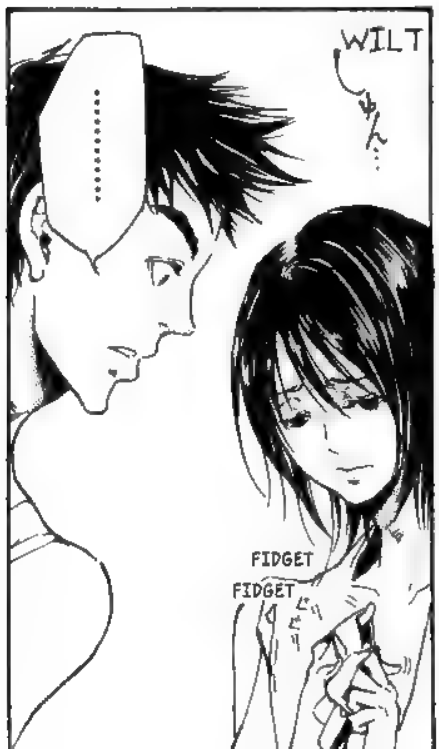
WHY DID YOU PRESERVE POISON CHRYSAN-THEMUM?!
I JUST SPRUNG HER FROM JAIL!!
I TOLD YOU...
...TO KEEP HER BODY LOOKING GOOD!
THAT'S BECAUSE SHE TOLD ME...
...THAT SHE WAS TIRED OF KILLING AND WANTED ME TO PRESERVE HER...
...BEAUTIFULLY AMONGST THE FLOWERS.
THANKS TO HER, MY EXPERIMENT SUCCEEDED.
...ANRI.
SHE WANTED TO REMAIN YOUNG IN YOUR THOUGHTS...
HUH? SHE SAID THAT?
YOU KNEW, AND YOU USED HER!
YEAH.
YOU'RE AWFUL.
TEE HEE!

...BUT DESPITE MY THREATS, THAT GIRL WOULDN'T GIVE UP.
THIS WORE ME OUT. I WANTED TO TRY MY HAND AT TAXIDERMY...
YOU'VE STARTED GATHERING CRIMINALS AGAIN.
IS THE PLAN BACK ON?
WHEN WILL YOU BRING BACK SHIRO?
HMM...
HIS NAME IS KOJIRO YAMADA.
I CAN'T HELP...
...BUT GET THE FEELING THAT...
THERE ARE OTHER GUYS I CAN USE.
ANOTHER HUMAN SACRIFICE. HOW SAD.
...I'VE SEEN HIM...
...SOMEWHERE BEFORE.

AS IF!
HE'S JUST YOUR TYPE!
YEAH. I WANNA THROW MY ARMS AROUND HIM!
HA HA HA!
YOU MINX, YOU!
THE GANG SHOULD BEAT ON YOU AND DRAG YOU AROUND AND SAVAGE YOU UNTIL YOU CRY!
JUST LIKE THE OLD DAYS!!
THE WAY YOU PRETEND TO BE HUMAN MAKES ME SICK!
YOU...
...DOG-MAN!!!
GRND
HURRY ON BACK...
...TO THE GANG'S DOGHOUSE!!
LET THEM TEASE YOU TO DEATH!!
HEH

SHUT UP, YOU PERVERT!
DIE!!
IF YOU'RE GONNA STEP ON ME, DO IT HARDER!
WHAT'S THE MATTER? YOU'RE CUTE WHEN YOU'RE JEALOUS!

DO YOUR WOUNDS HURT?
FORGET ABOUT IT! I TOLD YOU THEY DON'T!
...EVERY WOMAN YOU SEE!!
THIS WOULDN'T HAVE HAPPENED IF YOU DIDN'T CHASE AFTER...
YOU IDIOT!!

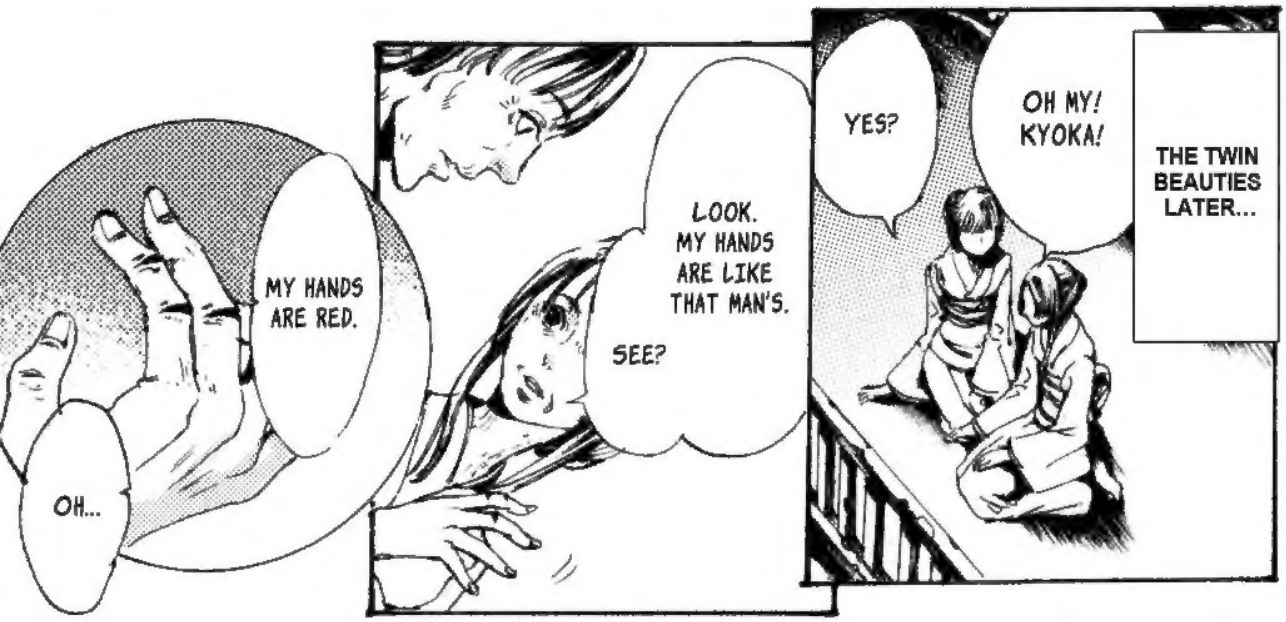

WILT
.....
FIDGET
FIDGET

...FOR EVERY-THING.
I TRULY AM...
...SORRY...
UM...

I'LL NEVER LET YOU GO!!
SMUSH
I TRUST MY MEMORIES MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE!
OW!
KONK
ARGH! THAT ISN'T LIKE YOU! WHATEVER YOUR PAST, YOU'VE CLEANED UP! YOU'RE MY FRIEND!!
ONES YOU DON'T WANT TO FORGET, ONES YOU DON'T WANT OTHERS TO FORGET, ONES THAT LEND YOU STRENGTH...
THERE ARE VARIOUS KINDS OF MEMORIES.
SIGH
RUB
...YOU'RE MY FRIEND!
NOW AND FROM NOW ON...
THAT COMES LATER.
...FROM A DESIRE TO STAY IN OTHERS' HEARTS... LIKE MR. ISHINOMORI DID.
...IT ISN'T GOOD TO LET THE PAST BIND YOU. AND IT ISN'T RIGHT TO FLOUNDER AROUND...
I DON'T KNOW MUCH. BUT...

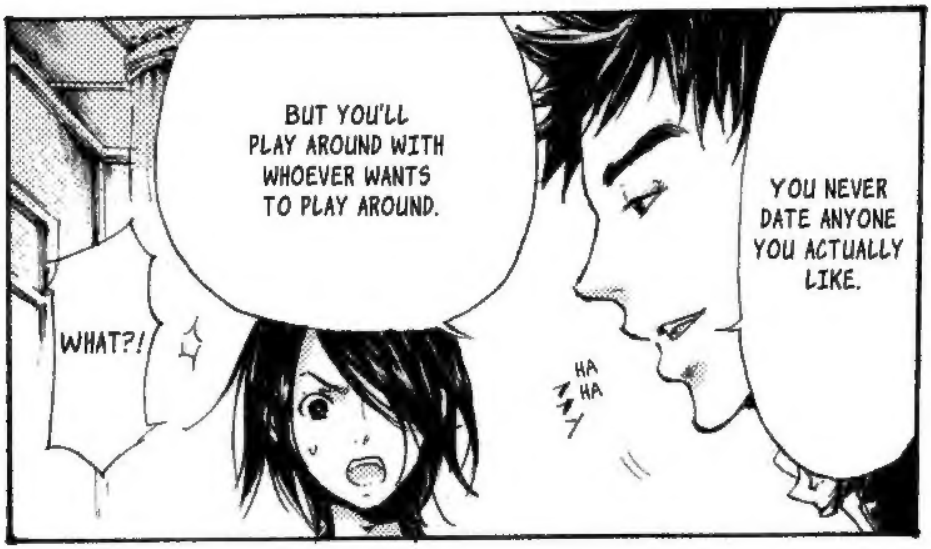
...WITHOUT SHAME.
WHAT'S IMPORTANT...
...IS HOW YOU PRESS ON IN THE DAYS AHEAD...
...THAT I GET ANGRY.
IN MY MEMORY, YOU'RE ALWAYS SUCH A GREAT GUY...
YOU HAVEN'T LEARNED A THING!!!
OW!
ドゴ
THOK
END
YEAH!! IT'S ALMOST TIME FOR MY DATE WITH THIS WOMAN WHO TALKED TO ME ON THE ST-
ぐわし
HUG
YOU FINALLY SMILED! THAT'S GOOD!!
I'M SERI-OUS.
YOU WON'T FOOL ME...
THERE YOU GO AGAIN...

EXTRA:
THREE PORTRAITS OF THE WOMEN LATER



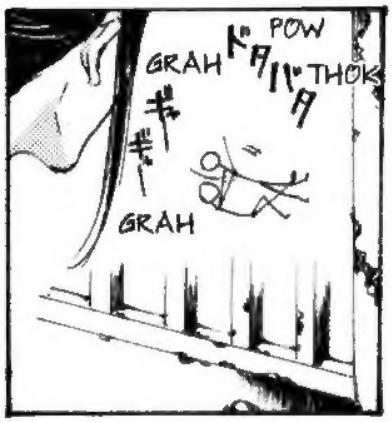
THE IRON RING CLAN GIRL LATER...
HEY, SHIRO. EARLIER, THAT GIRL FROM THE IRON RING CLAN WAS LOOKING FOR YOU IN TOWN.
HUH?!
THAT GIRL I MET?!

I THINK SHE HAS FEELINGS FOR YOU.
HUH?
CARICATURE
I THOUGHT I SHOULD CHECK WITH YOU.
.....
I COULD UNDERSTAND A GRUDGE...
...BUT...?


YOU NEVER DATE ANYONE YOU ACTUALLY LIKE.
HA HA
BUT YOU'LL PLAY AROUND WITH WHOEVER WANTS TO PLAY AROUND.
WHAT?!

JUST LET IT GO.
I WON'T MEET HER.
HMPH
.....

MAYBE YOU GO CRAZY FOR WOMEN WHO ARE SERIOUS ABOUT YOU.
WHAT? N-NO!!



AFTERWORD

HELLO. I'M TSUKIJI NAO. THANK YOU FOR READING THIS BOOK!

I'M SO HAPPY THAT I COULD PUBLISH A SECOND VOLUME! I ASKED ***WINGS*** TO LET ME INCLUDE A ONE-SHOT AND MAKE THIS ONE MORE EROTIC, SO I COULDN'T DIG INTO SHIRO AND ANRI'S PAST AS MUCH AS I WANTED. >_< SORRY. I WILL BE SURE TO DIG MORE IN THE FUTURE! AND SOON I WANT TO HAVE ANRI AND KOJIRO BECOME INVOLVED WITH EACH OTHER, AND I WANT TO MAKE MORE USE OF SUB-CHARACTERS LIKE SAOTOME AND SHINZO. AND THE MAGAZINE FEATURING THE SERIES HAS CHANGED, SO I THINK I CAN DELIVER STORIES MORE FREQUENTLY NOW. SHIRO AND KOJIRO AND I WILL HAVE A GOOD TIME AND WORK HARD. I OFFER MY UTMOST THANKS TO EVERYONE WHO EXPRESSED THEIR OPINIONS AND ENCOURAGEMENT, MY FRIENDS WHO ALWAYS LEND MORAL SUPPORT, MY EDITOR WHO ALWAYS TAKES CARE OF ME, THE MANY PEOPLE INVOLVED IN MAKING THIS BOOK, AND EVERYONE WHO READ IT!

TSUKIJI NAO

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